

The Scent of Jasmine

Experiencing Knowledge and Emotion in Cross Cultural Contexts of
South Indian Classical Dance

Joanna Rose Jacobson

PhD
University of Edinburgh
2000



I declare that this thesis has been composed by myself and is the product of my own work.

Signed: ,

Date: 27th Sept. 2000

Abstract

My thesis uses the experience of learning bharatanatyam, classical dance-form of Tamilnadu, Southern India, to explore anthropological notions of the experience and formulation of emotion. As research unfolded, I became increasingly interested in understanding how bharatanatyam is taught, understood and experienced by those dancers who principally live and study bharatanatyam outside India. Consequently, my fieldwork emerged as multi-sited, and considers dance contexts in Edinburgh, London, and Chidambaram—a small temple town to the south of Chennai, India.

My analysis is primarily a phenomenological one. Drawing on Indian aesthetic theory, which gives meticulous and analytical attention to the emotional aesthetic in the dance, I discuss the processes through which emotion is taught, formulated, experienced and expressed by dancers, and the relationship between ‘personal’ and ‘aesthetic’ emotion. I suggest that the nature of bharatanatyam is implicated in a system of teaching (*gurukulam*) which may at times be incompatible with the ‘displaced’ environments in which bharatanatyam is often taught nowadays, but which must be retained in some aspect to render the dance meaningful. Thus my thesis also necessarily considers the epistemological issues which students and teachers experience in the face of particular notions of knowledge and meaning, where tensions reveal important questions for discussion.

In a broader context, these are also issues that anthropologists face when confronted with systems of knowledge which challenge how meaning is formulated. Using the dance as an anthropological tool, my work addresses this in relation to discussions of bodily and embodied knowledge, and places them within issues of self and emotion. I suggest, in the case of bharatanatyam, this cannot be wholly understood within our own theoretical framework, a process highlighted by cross-cultural experiences of learning dance. Thus, using theoretical analysis and textual play, I take the reader to a fuller understanding of the very ways in which knowledge may be created and made meaningful.

Acknowledgements

This thesis was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council of Great Britain, award number R00429634185. It was completed with the help of the RAI Satusoma Award.

My thanks go first to all my dance teachers, particularly to Priya for introducing me to the intense beauty of bharatanatyam, and to Anusha for re-kindling my self-worth and joy in the dance. Thanks also to Seona and Mark for the many precious moments shared together through dancing, and the struggle and happiness they brought. Thanks to all those dancers who shared their experiences with me, especially Manisha and Sangeeta. Special thanks to Magdalen Gorringe for her invaluable contribution and her lovely presence.

Thanks to my supervisor, Tony Good, for his forbearance, good-humour and sound advice during writing-up, and to Iris Jean-Klein for providing a second voice and opinion when I needed them. Thanks are also due to Janet Carsten for her timely persuasion that I should continue with the whole endeavour. I am grateful to all my fellow postgraduates who have helped along the way, both in post-graduate seminars and in sharing the whole challenge of completing a PhD. Thanks, then, to Michael Taylor, Doug Kline, Hafizah Selamat, Abi Montani, Fiona Harris and Gill Clark. Thanks also to Louise who, even at a distance, and among many other things, always helps me keep faith in anthropology.

My parents, Nigel and Juliet Wimhurst, have been invaluable with their support and faith in me throughout the whole project, particularly during my time in India. For that, and for time spent proof reading, I am eternally grateful. For the latter, thanks are also due to my mother-in-law, Janet Jacobson. Thank you to Neil Montgomery for calmly offering his time and advice concerning visuals.

Finally, of course, I must thank my husband, Niall, for his unconditional support. Without him, I could never begin to understand the true face of love.

Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
Contents.....	iii
Notes on the Text.....	iv
 Introduction.....	 1
 BOOK ONE.....	 29
Chapter 1	
Pushpanjali: Dance as Art.....	30
Chapter 2	
Jatiswaram: Locating Meaning.....	58
Chapter 3	
Varnam: Teaching and Learning.....	97
Chapter 4	
Padam: Constituting Emotion.....	128
Chapter 5	
Tillana: Performing.....	161
Conclusion.....	198
 BOOK TWO.....	 207
Opening Comments.....	208
Poetry.....	209
 Selected Glossary.....	 229
Bibliography.....	231

Notes on the Text

(i) Language

Indian dance terminology engenders a complex mixture of languages, and particular to bharatanatyam is the use of Sanskrit, Tamil, Tamilised Sanskrit and Telugu (see Kersenboom 1991 fn. 2). These and other language terms in the text are italicised with their meanings in the first instance. Subsequent uses are not italicised. The reader will quickly become familiar with those terms in constant use. Diacritics are not used in the text, but appear in a selected glossary of terms.

(ii) Use of gender-specific pronouns

When I refer to 'the dancer' in general terms I use the feminine pronoun. This is not to imply in any way that all bharatanatyam dancers are female—they are not—but is simply used to aesthetically replace more cumbersome alternatives. I deem it appropriate as there *are* undoubtedly more female dancers, as were the majority of dancers I encountered. It also helps to distinguish the dance student from her guru or teacher, who is referred to in gender-neutral terms.

Introduction

Alarippu

The rain is coming down hard. It is coming down in sheets, straight down, wet on my face as I walk across the temple courtyard. My red scarf is over my head and sticking to my forehead. The deity is richly decorated. I try and focus on his face to the exclusion of everything else. The golden roof is bright, outlined against a bruised sky. There is a chubby priest there, holding a small steel vessel under the dripping gutter.

Hurrying, I make my way to the devi temple. With quickness and ease I sincerely complete my worship to the seven goddesses, to Ganesha, and finally to Devi, who is naked of a cloth sari and has sandal painted on her eyebrows.

Walking back, I am a lonely figure. The rain courses round my ankles as I watch the tank, which is green and grey, the rain falling in torrents down the steps. Now my scarf is sodden and my trousers stick to my legs, and I sense somehow, that this is how it was meant to be, this last visit, with the sky dark, the rain falling in buckets.

I left India sooner than anyone expected, myself included. Being there showed me more clearly and more truly where I was at in terms of the dance, and how this should influence the direction of my work in anthropology. As anthropologist, I had no choice but to learn from this understanding, and to present it in a meaningful way. This thesis is about learning bharatanatyam, classical dance-form of Tamilnadu, Southern India. Primarily, it is about learning it outside India. In the thesis, I examine the processes by which dancers whose cultural and social lives fall, to a large extent, outwith bharatanatyam's obvious context, experience the dance-form. I consider the ways it impacts on their personal, emotional and physical lives, ultimately allowing them to reproduce the aesthetic emotion of the form as they dance.

Most clearly in India, I realised I was not *beginning* fieldwork in any respect. I had been dancing bharatanatyam for three years previously, and for two years prior to starting my PhD, and if I was honest, much of my fieldwork had to be acknowledged in retrospect. Most importantly in India, I realised the attachment I felt towards my first dance teacher, whom I had been studying with in Edinburgh, and the enormity of the fact that I had left her to study with someone else. I realised that I should never have left her at all. Her presence remained in my dance-forms and in my attitude to the dance.

Fieldwork, then, did not belong to a place, but to an activity, which stayed constant throughout the geographically multi-sited aspect that my research took on. I became

interested in the ways that dancers primarily learning bharatanatyam outside India accessed the form. I began to picture these kinds of contexts as 'displaced' in some way, although not in a way that implies that a pristine or authentic context exists or existed. Rather, these contexts are viewed as having elements that are pictured or experienced by dancers and their teachers as less than 'ideal' for learning dance, or where students are obviously distanced from the daily experiences and imagery on which the symbolic forms of the dance draw. One of my teachers, for example, particularly cited urban environments as inhibiting the study of bharatanatyam, whether in India or abroad.

All dancers recognise that bharatanatyam is a gift in their lives; a chance to live and experience in a different and particular and beautiful way. Underneath this dialogue, however, I also sensed areas of tension, which dancers recognise and articulate less fully, but which were extraordinarily consistent with each other and with my own experience. To explore all this further, I returned to Scotland. Unable to return to my first dance teacher, I began a period of fieldwork in London. Distressed as I was at being rejected by my first teacher, I soon realised that anthropologically, being in London crystallised many of the ideas and experiences that I had encountered hitherto, and allowed me to formulate the direction of the thesis as it emerges in the following chapters.

I now realise that, unwittingly, I sacrificed something of the possibilities in learning dance for me personally by making it an object of anthropological study. I trust, however, that I have not sacrificed them entirely. I am undoubtedly changed by dancing. The premise that anthropology is necessarily about sacrificing its own ideals in the face of its subject (cf. Wikan 1990: 282) exists throughout my work. In this way, I generate for the reader particular ways in which dance must be understood in order to appreciate the nature of meaning which I address. I trust, also, that my work is enjoyable and engaging on a number of levels. I have structured the thesis in terms of the order of dance items in a classical bharatanatyam performance.¹ These items are carefully presented on stage in such a way as to lead the audience on a particular journey, unfolding greater depths with each progression, culminating in the central item, and moving towards a joyful finale.

This introduction is an *alarippu*. The *alarippu* is the first item which a dancer learns, and traditionally opens any dance performance. It is a highly technical piece with close attention to form and rhythm, focusing entirely on the pure (abstract) dance aspect of bharatanatyam,

¹ In keeping with my aim to emphasise an experiential analysis of bharatanatyam rather than a political, historical or technical one, I employ 'classical' as an ethnographic term used by practitioners, rather than an analytic one.

nritta, with no dramatic emotional content in the form of *abhinaya*. It acts as a warm up for both audience and dancer, but is not without a vibrant and compelling beauty of its own, touched with elements of play and charm. In the following pages, I address two main aspects in order to frame my work. Firstly, I provide a short background to bharatanatyam for the purpose of orientating newcomers to the dance historically and technically. Secondly, I consider my fieldwork experiences and their impact on the methodologies that I employ. This embraces theoretical issues both pertinent to anthropology and particular to my work and subject. The latter is used to expose the former. They relate both to understanding the incidence of fieldwork and to translating this into meaningful text. I end with a brief overview of the thesis chapter by chapter.

Bharatanatyam

history: the devadasis

Bharatanatyam is one of several Indian classical dance forms.² Native to Tamilnadu, the southernmost state of India, it is a hugely popular form of classical dance taught and performed across the whole of India and world-wide. Versions of it are regularly staged at all levels of performance and widely witnessed on television and in the movies. Its roots, however, are centuries old, and can be found in the temple dancing of the *devadasis*, and in its counterpart which the same women performed in court, *catir kacceri* (Kersenboom 1995), or *dasi attam*. Dancing in temple ritual can be traced in early literature dating back to 300 BCE (Shankar 1994), and dedicating girls to temples as devadasis was widespread by the 6th century AD (ibid.). These dance traditions have been widely covered both historically and ethnographically in work which is both illuminating and analytical (Marglin 1985; Kersenboom 1991, 1995; Sadasivan 1993; Shankar 1994; Gaston 1996). Their work is invaluable to my study, and to placing bharatanatyam in its historical sequence. My work, however, touches on temple dance only in the present implications it has as socially and individually articulated (see also Gaston 1991: 152), or in the ways that it can inform my theoretical analysis. Most importantly, I am concerned with how bharatanatyam's historical inheritance is imagined and experienced by dancers, if at all.

² Other classical forms include: kathak, which originated in the North of India; odissi, from the state of Orissa; kathakali, dance-drama from Kerala, originally performed only by men; mohiniattam, female dance-form, also from Kerala; kuchipudi, dance-drama from Andhra Pradesh.

The devadasi, meaning female servant of god, was a woman for whom dancing was a profession. It was by and large a hereditary position, and one in which a girl was betrothed to the temple god at a young age, dedicated to his service, and through this divine marriage became an 'ever-auspicious-female' (Kersenboom 1995: 91). Devadasis gained this status for two reasons. Ordinary women pass through varying states of auspiciousness as they move through the life cycle—the most auspicious being one who has given birth to several children and whose husband is still alive, whilst the status of a widow becomes the most inauspicious. By dint of her dedication to a divine husband, the devadasi can never enter the state of widowhood. Additionally, her individual female powers which connect her with the goddess, inherent in any woman, are ritually merged with the goddess. This makes her doubly auspicious (op. cit.).

Her task was to partake in daily temple ritual and yearly festival activities, a role which incorporated dance as part of a complete set of ritual activities.³ Her part in early evening (six o'clock) *puja* was particularly important. At this time, her presence and activity of waving the potlamp⁴ was particularly needed to ward off an inauspicious state of the divine. In addition, the devadasis accompanied the daily procession of the deities during morning *puja*, singing devotional songs to foster a mood of devotion, and during the bedroom ritual, singing lullabies as the god and goddess were rocked to sleep on a swing. In addition to this, and following the close association between king and temple, she also performed in court, with a different and more ornately sophisticated repertoire, which eventually developed into the intricate repertoire of bharatanatyam.

A girl's passage through training was marked at various intervals after which she became fully able to perform her function at the above rituals. She was trained from a young age within the teaching system of *gurukulam*. In this system she is part of a *guru – sisya* relationship where she lives as a disciple in her guru's house, becomes part of the household and performs the daily tasks related to running the house and caring for her guru alongside dance classes. Dance training was strict and rigorous. I heard stories, for example, of students being made to practise whilst tied at the waist by a rope attached to a wall, in order for them to learn to keep their hips still.

³ Kersenboom (1991) defines this role as composed of two elements. Firstly, the purely ritual and instrumental, and secondly the devotional, with the purpose of fostering a mood of devotion (*bhakti*).

⁴ The ritual function by which Kersenboom's informant's defined their profession.

Traditionally, teachers were male. Boys were trained in the dance, not to perform,⁵ but to teach and conduct performances using their skills in *nattuvangam*.⁶ The three main schools of *nattuvangam* come from the villages of Pandanallur and Vazhuvoor and from Thanjavur town, lending their names to the styles of *bharatanatyam* taught and performed today. Pandanallur and Thanjavur styles share descent from the famous quartet of musicians from Thanjavur—Chinniah, Ponniah, Sivanamdham and Vadivelu (Ramnarayan 1998). Theirs was an oral tradition of dance teaching and composition.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, and particularly in response to British colonial rule, *devadasis* became less active in temple ritual, and their practice began to decline. In the Madras Census Report of 1901, *devadasis* are defined as ‘“handmaidens of the gods, [they] are dancing girls attached to the Tamil temples, who subsist by dancing and music and the practice of the oldest profession”’ (cited in Gaston 1980: 64). In the same vein, the report of 1911 says: ‘“In South India, a girl may marry an arrow, or a tree, perhaps to escape the reproach of attaining puberty unmarried. She may marry an idol, which generally implies that she becomes a prostitute”’ (ibid.: 66). Here we see the kinds of misinformed attitudes being generated, both in reference to *devadasis*, and to marriage rituals in general, where marrying girls to inanimate objects in fact represents certain puberty rites (Good 1991).

Devadasis, as courtesans attached to both temple and court, gained a misleading reputation as temple prostitutes, both due to a misinterpretation of the erotic content of the dance rituals, and to their role as wives of temple god, which by extension led them into sexual relations with priests and local princes. These kinds of interpretations, initiated by colonial perceptions, prevailed. The *devadasis* economic and social problems were exacerbated by the political upheaval of the time. The disempowerment of the traditional kingdoms that formed an important part of the traditional structures within which the *devadasis* worked, for example, forced them into roles which did indeed resemble prostitution. By the early twentieth century much temple dancing had been banned in the temples under British rule, although no official restriction existed in the princely states until the advent of Independence in 1947 (Gaston 1980), when the *Devadasis* Act was passed, making the *devadasis*’ role as temple servants illegal.

⁵ Nowadays, teaching and performing is carried out by both men and women and there are varying opinions about whether this makes a difference. See chapter three for further observations about this.

⁶ Dance performances are always accompanied by someone, usually the teacher, singing the rhythms for the dancer and playing them on a small pair of cymbals. Singing these rhythms is called *nattuvangam*. Because of their skill in this, and in teaching, dance masters in this tradition are called *nattuvans*.

A devadasi's relationship to the king was akin to that of the divine.⁷ A dance concert (*catir kacceri*) was performed for the king on ritual occasions and consisted of several dance items, taking their names from the musical pieces which accompanied them, and incorporating aspects of both pure and dramatic dance. Dancers became extremely skilled. The suite outlined by Kersenboom (1991: 144 fn. 11) is as follows:

- introductory tuning and prayer (*melaprapti*)
- a warming up dance (*alarippu*; an abstract dance composition intended as a greeting).
- choreographic dance patterns based on musical notes (*jatisvaram*)
- a mythological anecdote in mime (*sabdam*)
- a composition combining intricate abstract choreographies and mimetic interpretation of a text (*varnam*)
- a love song rendered in mime (*padam*)
- an erotic song rendered in mime (*javali*, Telugu)
- a grand finale in abstract dance choreography (*tillana*, 'ending')

It is this programme and style of dancing which developed into *bharatanatyam*, and is recognisable in the item programming sequence of staged performances today. Present day performances of this programme may run continuously for one or two hours.

Economically, in their traditional role as devadasis, these women seemingly occupied a unique position as independent economic agents. As temple servants and recipients of a share of the *inam* lands for temple service,⁸ they both retained access to land and gathered wealth in the form of gifts for the performance of temple service. Not belonging to a conventional male household, they controlled this wealth themselves (cf. Orr 2000), where '[c]onnections with a temple...were frequently financially rewarding' (ibid.: 73). Further reports represent them as well-turned out and highly educated— 'an acquisition to the town', as 19th century medical officer, Dr. Shortt observes on a trip to Tamilnadu (Gaston 1980: 67). A '*dasi* character' relating to this image was often attributed to my teacher in India, Madam, herself part of the *dasi* tradition, by the priest with whom we worked, and Madam herself talked with much pride about her own life history.

⁷ Discussing a literary account of a day in the life of a medieval Tamil king, Rao, Shulman and Subrahmanyam (1992: 58-67) not only draw our attention to the way in which courtly ritual, with the devadasi as courtesan playing a central role, mirrors daily temple ritual, but also to the emphasis placed on aesthetic and erotic activity. The functional and ritual importance of the aesthetic described in chapter one is richly contextualised in the imagery and symbolism of the poetic verse they cite.

⁸ *Inam* land was tax-free land granted to institutional bodies (such as temples) or individuals by local princes, and then divided out to individuals (such as temple servants) for services rendered. For a comprehensive explanation of *inam* settlements see Dirks 1987 (appendix).

Because the process by which dance was transformed from temple ritual to art-form has taken place over a relatively short period of time, members of the original devadasis tradition are still alive and practising today, mainly in a teaching capacity. It is they who have provided anthropologists with the invaluable wealth of information surrounding the tradition (see interviews by Marglin 1985⁹ and Kersenboom 1987, 1991). Madam, for example, who was sixty-eight years old when she was teaching me in 1997-8, was eighteen when the Devadasis Act was passed in 1947. She never fulfilled a role in temple rituals, but did belong to a dasi family, trained within that tradition and danced for the local prince in court.

history: modern forms

As temple dancing was becoming stigmatised in the early twentieth century, movements to revive the dance in some form were beginning to surface. From the 1930s, bharatanatyam emerged amid debate about the nature of its content, particularly concerning the presentation and meaning of *sringara rasa*—the emotion of divine (erotic) love. The two sides of the debate came to be epitomised by the leading dancers of the time, both pivotal to the survival of the form: Rukmini Devi and T. Balasaraswati.¹⁰

Rukmini Devi, a brahmin woman, trained in bharatanatyam against the expectations of her caste. She spearheaded the ‘revival’ movement of the 1930s, although, as Gaston writes: ‘Although the term ‘revival’ is commonly applied, I concluded that there was less a revival than a conscious movement to discourage those who might otherwise have taken up dance as a hereditary profession from doing so’ (1996: 18). Following her debut performance (*arangetram*) in 1931, Rukmini Devi strove to change the character and reputation of the dance to distance it from the stigma of the devadasis, making it ‘respectable’ and acceptable as an art form.

In her opinion, this involved the removal of eroticised abhinaya (mime) and an emphasis on *bhakti* (devotion) as sublime emotion in a style that was ‘less physical and more distant’ (Gaston 1996: 87). She argued that expressing devotion through an erotic interpretation of *sringara* lent the dance a vulgarity which connected it with the soiled reputation of the

⁹ Marglin’s work is based not in Tamilnadu, but in Orissa, and with the classical dance-form of this state, odissi. Odissi is not dissimilar to bharatanatyam, although the overall form gives a different impression, with its emphasis on *tribhanga*, where the body is bent in three angles at the head, the waist and the knees, and its flowing and delicate style which highlights the feminine aspect of the dance. Orissa was not subject to the same ban on temple dancing as Tamilnadu, nor were dancers involved in dancing outside of temple life. Thus an unbroken teaching tradition exists in odissi in a way that it does not in bharatanatyam, which was in so many ways ‘re-invented.’

¹⁰ For a detailed account of the revival of the dance see Gaston (1996), chapters two and three.

devadasis. In 1958 she founded the Kalakshetra dance school in Chennai (Madras), Tamilnadu, to train young dancers. The school quickly established a formidable reputation which still exists today as it continues to train young people from all over the world in the Indian arts. Many of the first generation of non-hereditary dancers trained at Kalakshetra. Resulting from Rukmini Devi's legacy, bharatanatyam acquired a new element as a signifier of class and caste identity. No longer the hereditary preserve of professional temple dancers, it came to be associated rather with young brahmin dancers where to learn bharatanatyam was a desirable 'accomplishment'. Additionally, it became an important cultural and national marker, representing the grace, wisdom and tradition of ancient India, in a nation searching for visible repositories of identity.

T. Balasaraswati was a hereditary dancer, a devadasi, who was beginning to perform bharatanatyam on stage at the same time as Rukmini Devi. She emphasised the erotic nature of *sringara* as the essence of devotion, but not in a way that vulgarised the dance.

[S]ome seek to "purify" Bharatanatyam by replacing the traditional lyrics which express *sringara* with devotional songs. I wish to respectfully submit to such protagonists that there is nothing in Bharatanatyam which can be purified afresh; it is divine as it is and innately so. The *sringara* we experience is never carnal; never, never. For those who have yielded themselves to its discipline with total dedication, dance like music, is the practice of the presence; it cannot be merely the body's rapture (Balasaraswati 1980: 100).¹¹

Her opinions influenced many bharatanatyam dancers working abroad at the time, particularly Ram Gopal who was working with Ravi Shankar in London. The legacy of the revival movement is still very clearly present in bharatanatyam, where individuals are now free to interpret *sringara rasa* as suits their personality and style.

The initial need to de-emphasise the dance's temple origins has now been supplanted by a movement to 're-ritualise' bharatanatyam, with social, professional and artistic repercussions (Gaston 1991). Marglin emphasises, however, that 'dancers on urban stages are divorced from the ritual worlds of the temple and are trained in secular settings' (1990: 212). I return to the relationship between the religious and the secular throughout the thesis as I try to discover the significance of both in the dance experience. In this introduction, I wish to highlight that the differing opinions that abound in the bharatanatyam dance scene reflect the historically politicised environment surrounding it. Views concerning what dance is and

¹¹ Taken from a version of the author's Presidential address to the Tamil Isai Sangam Annual Conference 1975.

should be or represent are highly contested, and, in India particularly, and almost in spite of itself, bharatanatyam can still reflect caste and class divides. My study, however, seeks to subordinate these cultural and political motifs belonging to the dance in favour of exploring the experiential processes which comprise its emotional aesthetic. For this reason, the displaced contexts and multi-sited aspect of my fieldwork, where new motifs overlay the old, become particularly revealing.

Professional dancers nowadays, both within and outside India, take the dance in many new directions, drawing on a legacy of innovation in the form, and on particular dancers who have developed their dancing in numerous ways. Contemporary choreography may be subtle re-workings of classical dance items, or it may be radically formulated from a whole range of movement techniques, of which bharatanatyam is only a small part. Companies and individuals experiment with the classical dance genre in order to create a newer contemporary style often accompanied by completely non-traditional music. One of the most well-known and ground-breaking companies for producing contemporary Indian dance in the UK, for example, is that of Shobhana Jeyasingh, who mixes a variety of forms, including classical Indian dance, martial arts and sport, and contemporary western dance, to produce her choreography. Part of the present concern of many dancers is that bharatanatyam should be technically recognised alongside other dance forms, particularly western contemporary dance and ballet.

content: textual and mythological origins

With the social and historical setting outlined above, I move on to discuss the theoretical and mythological origins of bharatanatyam, and describe aspects of the content and technique of the form.

Although the devadasis passed on knowledge of the dance orally, with technique and form handed from teacher to student, bharatanatyam in its modern form takes recourse to textual foundations also. The oldest of these, the *Natyasastra*, a Sanskrit text, dates to c.200 AD (Kersenboom 1995) and is attributed to the legendary saint Bharata. Here, *sastra* means 'science' in the sense of 'teachings' or 'treatise', and the work concerns Hindu theories of the aesthetic, embracing all the dramatic arts including dance, music, poetry, architecture and painting. The *Natyasastra* is named as the 'fifth Veda'. Based on divine knowledge, it is intended to instruct all people, regardless of caste, in the aesthetic principles leading to *rasas*—the divine emotional aesthetic states. It instructs both the audience and the artist in the recognition of the divine arts.

Brahma, knower of the truth, went into deep meditation and out of all the four Vedas drew a fifth scripture, Natya Veda, the scripture of the drama, presenting moral and spiritual truth. And he said to the people, "This art is not merely for your pleasure, but exhibits bhava (expression) for all the three worlds. I made this art as following the movement of the world whether in work or play, profit, peace, laughter, battle or slaughter, yielding the fruit of righteousness for those who follow the moral law, a restraint for the unruly, a discipline for the followers of a rule, to create wisdom in the ignorant, learning in scholars, affording sport to kings and endurance to the sorrow stricken, replete with the diverse moods, informed with the varying passions of the soul, linked to the deeds of mankind, the best, the middling and the low, affording excellent counsel, pastime and all else" (in Sarabhai 1996: 2).

A later text by Nandikesvara, the Abhinaya Darpana (Mirror of Gestures), dated to the thirteenth century AD or earlier (Ghosh 1957), is equally used to interpret and construct the dance, being 'the more practically useful work' (Raghupathy, Sarma and Ramaratnam [eds] 1998). The tenth century philosopher, Abhinavagupta gives further interpretations and insights into the nature of the aesthetic experience of rasa described in the Natyasastra.

Paying minute attention to the details of every limb, facial gesture and costume, the texts outline the form, movement and meaning of the dance. These derive from the sculptural depictions of dance postures, *karanas*, in temple carvings. There are 108 individual karanas depicting different dance poses from which the dance is constructed. The forms of temple sculptures greatly reflect the character of the dance, with its strong, clean forms, which are indeed statuesque. All 108 karanas are depicted on the temple walls in Chidambaram, where Siva in his form as Nataraja, the Cosmic Dancer, resides, under the protection of the Deekshithar family priests, who hold custody of the Temple outside state control.

It is in Chidambaram, the site of the mythological forest of *tillai*, that Siva first danced the *ananda tandava*, the dance of bliss. Siva entered the forest to convert some unbelievers living in there. Beholding Siva, these *rishis* lit a sacrificial fire. A tiger jumped out of the fire, and Siva tore it apart and tied its skin around him. Next, a huge snake appeared, which Siva took, dancing, and coiled it around his neck. Finally the terrifying embodiment of evil, the dwarf Muyalaka, came out of the fire. Still dancing, Siva crushed the dwarf.

Thus the form of the Nataraja is shown with one leg lifted in dance, the other firmly planted on the demon, and representing his conquering ignorance. Ganga, the river Ganges, flows from his head and he stands on the lotus, the heart of every human. He has four arms in whose hands are held the *damaru* (drum) from which all sound is born, and *agni* (fire),

representing knowledge; these two elements are also those of creation and destruction. His right hand is lifted in blessing; the other, pointing towards the lifted foot, denotes the freedom of the soul. Surrounding him is a ring of fire, the eternal cycle of the universe returning to oneness.

The second legendary event which took place in Chidambaram is that of the dance contest between Siva and Kali. Watched by devotees, the two deities danced in order to prove who, as the greater dancer, would enter the Nritta Sabha, the hall of dance. In the course of the competition, Siva's earring fell to the ground. He retrieved it, lifting his foot high, straight above his head. Out of modesty, Kali would not replicate this movement and compromise her virtue, so withdrew from the Sabha, acknowledging defeat. Siva in this form also resides in Chidambaram temple.

Countless are the Places of Shiva in this universe.
Amongst these sacred spaces is the beautiful Thillai forest
with its honey filled flowers,
sweet fruits
and shady orchards.¹²

content: form and technique

Bharatanatyam is a highly technical dance form, involving years of dedicated training. Ideally, children start at a young age, and the initial stages of training take at least seven years to complete. When a student completes her initial training she is introduced to the world with her first solo performance, her arangetram, in which she performs a full classical programme of the items described above. The essentials of the dance consist of *bhava*, *raga* and *tala*—expression, melody and rhythm. 'The dancer should with the throat sing; with the feet express the tala; with the eyes express the bhava, and with the hands express meaning' (Padmanabhan Tampy 1963: 210).¹³ Bhava is expressed through abhinaya, the mimetic aspect of the dance using *mudras* (hand gestures), and facial expression, where the angle of the eyes, arch of the eyebrow or the curve of the mouth play an important and technically specified part. Ultimately, through all these aspects, the dance expresses rasa. Rasa is the experience of aesthetic emotion, closely associated with divine presence, particularly through the experience of sringara rasa, which, as we have seen, is the rasa of divine love in

¹² From Chidambaram Mahatmyam, trans. Deekshithar (1997).

¹³ Padmanabhan Tampy writes about kathakali, dance drama from Kerala, traditionally performed by men, which characteristically pays close attention to make-up and costume. Much of what is written about kathakali is equally relevant to Bharatanatyam, particularly relating to aesthetic theory, the use of bhava and the expression of rasa (see also Zarrilli 2000).

an erotic or romantic sense. Rasa also implies 'taste' or 'flavour', used in association with food, and so we see important connotations emerging where we locate the meaning of rasa in bodily experience. In rasa, we find some kind of pure essence of feeling.

Within the dance are three types of form or movement which dominate to varying extents in different items. *Natya* is the dramatic contents of a piece, *nritta*, pure or abstract dance, and *nritya*, expression in the dance through abhinaya (mimed gesture). *Nritta* has no specific meaning or theme in a mimetic sense, but uses mudras (hand gestures) and facial gesture in a simple expression of a beautiful aesthetic. In the *Natyasastra*:

The sages raise a doubt. Abhinaya (gestures) was thought out by experts to convey a (definite) meaning. Now why is *nrtta* postulated? What is its essential characteristic? It is not related to the meaning of a song nor does it convey the meanings of words. So why is *nrtta* introduced in songs and *asarita-s* [musical introductions for practising the beat of time fractions]? My reply to this, says Bharata, is as follows—True, *nrtta* conveys no meaning, but it creates beauty (attraction) to the performance. Generally, people like dance. It is also considered to be auspicious (trans. Rangacharya 1996: 35-6).

Western audiences particularly respond to dance items which are substantially *nritta*-based, because it is more obviously accessible to the eye than the particularities of abhinaya.¹⁴

Pure dance (*nritta*) consists of poses and rhythmic patterns constructed from exercises learnt in the process of dance training, *adavus* and *jatis*. An *adavu* is the fundamental unit of dance, and classes consist of going over various combinations of *adavus* alongside practising mudras, abhinaya and dance items. Each *adavu* has a posture (*sthaanaka*), a movement of the legs and feet (*chaari*), a decorative hand gesture (*nritta hasta*) and the correct position of the hands throughout the movement (*hastakshetra*).¹⁵ The most basic *bharatanatyam* stance is *aramandi*—often referred to by teachers as 'half-sit'—a low position with knees bent, legs and feet turned out to the side. *Jatis* are particular rhythmic patterns, the most basic of which relate to different cycles of beats, namely three, four, five, seven and nine. These represent the *tala* in dance, and may be spoken in percussive syllables as well as danced.¹⁶ For example:

¹⁴ See chapter five.

¹⁵ Taken from *Laghu-Bharatham* (Raghupathy, Sudharani & Thangaswami Sarma 1998) and *A Dictionary of Bharata Natya* (Rao 1990).

¹⁶ There are various ways of writing these rhythms, which only really make any sense in the spoken form, and if teachers request students to write down rhythms to commit to memory, they rarely pay attention to how students formulate them as notation. I encourage the reader to try and speak these sounds out loud in order to make sense of them. The 'th' sound is a hard sound, somewhere between a 'd' and a 't'.

Tishram	(three beats)	tha-ki-tha
Chatishram	(four beats)	tha-ka-dhi-mi
Kandam	(five beats)	tha-ka, tha-ki-tha
Mishram	(seven beats)	tha-ki-tha, tha-ka-dhi-mi
Sankirnam	(nine beats)	tha-ka-dhi-mi, tha-ka, tha-ki-tha

These are the rhythms that ground the form as the feet strike the ground with neat accuracy; as the nattuvanar beats the air, calls the rhythm, cymbals chiming, the tongue resonating at the top of the mouth; as the fingers joyously strike the mridangam.¹⁷ A singer and violinist most often provide accompaniment also.

Mudras are described in the Natyasastra with their usage (*vinivoga*). Mudras, also the term given to the ritual hand gestures used by priests, are complex hand gestures with the fingers held in intricate patterns, symbolically meaningful in abhinaya, and aesthetically pleasing in nritya. There are twenty-eight single hand gestures (*asamyuta*) and twenty-four double (*samyuta*). For example, take the first single hand gesture, *pataka* (the flag) with some of its uses:

When the other fingers, held straight and the thumb slightly bent are brought close to each other, the (hand) gesture is called 'Pathaaka'.

In the beginning of a dance performance, to denote clouds, a forest, a prohibited thing, bosom, night, a river and heaven (the pathaaka gesture is used).

(To denote) a horse, cutting, wind, lying down, trying to go, valour, blessing, moonlight, scorching heat of the sun.

(Indicating) forcing open closed doors, seven case endings, waves, entering a street, equality, applying sandal paste.¹⁸

Coterminous with Hindu cosmology, the dance-form is balanced with masculine and feminine aspects. The flowing movements of the arm and upper body are *lasya* movements connected with the feminine, whilst the strong staccato rhythms in the legs and feet are *tandava*, connected with the masculine. The two are poised in graceful combination and seamless integration, the one perfectly in tune with the other. We see the same philosophy in the figure of the Nataraja, his left leg lifted in *lasya*, his right grounded in *tandava*.

¹⁷ The mridangam is the drum traditionally used to accompany bharatanatyam. It is a drum played by striking both ends with the fingers and palms.

¹⁸ From *Laghu Bharatham* (see fn. 9).

Alternatively, of course, we see it in the two figures of Siva, Lord of the dance, and Parvati, devi, the goddess, at his left hand side.

On stage, bharatanatyam is traditionally performed by a solo dancer, although nowadays it is very common to see groups or pairs of dancers. The dancer, in full make-up, rich costume, gold jewellery, jasmine in her hair, performs a continuous suite of items—*pushpanjali*, *alarippu*, *jatiswaram*, *sabdam*, *varnam*, *padam*, *tillana* and *mangalam*. In elegant and practised gestures of abhinaya, she conjures characters, describes deities, evokes scenes and tells mythical stories. The scenes she sets are both intimate and grand. They show a devotee in awe of her Lord, a *nayika* (heroine) waiting for her lover, who is perhaps Murugan, decorating herself in anxious or assured love. They show the fearsome side of the deity; the terrifying aspect of Siva, the destroyer, the crescent moon as his crown, his powerful third eye. Or Durga, the goddess who may be terrifying in battle or gentle and benevolent to her devotees. Baby Krishna is there, playing under his mother's patient and watchful eye. They depict scenes from Hindu mythology, great battles won and lost, deities conceived. Ganesha is there, the beautiful elephant-headed god, approachable and forgiving, eating sweets, ears flapping. You are watching, entranced.

Fieldwork

placing fieldwork

Something attracted me to the Indian dance class—perhaps the childhood memory of drawing an Indian dancer in felt-tip pens at school for a 'project on India' and being enchanted by her. The teacher in my first class was quiet and self-possessed, but open and generous with her knowledge of dance; puzzled by students' inability to perform the simplest of movements, but unfazed by it, continued in her task. Dressed in red and black, her face always symmetrically composed, often smiling, shades of emotion in her large eyes that twinkled with wicked amusement as we struggled to stay low and keep on stamping our feet in the first adavu for the length of time she required us to. Dancing made me happy and excited, somewhat in love. That was enough. I had no inkling of where it would lead.

This thesis is born out of four and a half years of learning bharatanatyam in three locations. Following a term of attending bharatanatyam classes once a week in Edinburgh, I took up dancing more seriously, joining a group of two adults and several teenage girls who were

also training on a regular basis. As the months went by the group changed as new people joined or old ones left. We attended every class possible with my teacher at different venues around town, and found other additional places to practise in. These classes were never entirely regular, and often organised at the last minute. Attending classes and, where necessary, performing, became the central focus of my time and energy.

Without having completed arangetrams, a number of us performed at small events often earlier than seemed appropriate to us. Some students were not always happy with this. In reality, we had very little choice but to do so, as any publicity for the group was always welcome. As the first group of Edinburgh-based bharatanatyam dancers, we were quickly asked to provide entertainment for a number of functions and 'do's' in both Edinburgh and Glasgow before we had ever performed formally, either as individuals or as a group. More importantly, we performed at my teacher's request. She often said that dancing at small and insignificant events would help us to overcome a fear of performing, enabling us to relax and focus on dancing to our best ability. We danced at council openings for multi-cultural departments, themed 'Indian' charity dinners, police race-relations evenings, diwali celebrations, multi-cultural festivals. Eventually we also staged shows of our own in theatre venues which included a number of more contemporary pieces choreographed by my teacher alongside pieces from the classical repertoire.

With three years of dance training with my teacher in Edinburgh completed, the last year of which was also the first year of my PhD, I left Scotland for Southern India. Initially, I assumed I would train with my teacher's guru, Mash ('master'), in Kerala. This proved to be impossible, but luckily, prior to my departure, I had tentatively talked to her about two other options that I had in case things didn't work out with Mash. One was to study with a teacher in Bangalore who had a small dance school there, and who had come to perform in Edinburgh some months before. The other, a contact that a friend had given me, was to study with a priest in Chidambaram, who taught dance alongside an old woman who was trained within the devadasi tradition. When I mentioned these to my teacher, she, reluctant to let me go to India at all, for reasons that will become clear in chapter three, simply volunteered that 'anyone in Chidambaram would be good.' Chidambaram is an important and romantic place in a dancer's imagination, and my teacher was betraying a feeling that I would absorb something of the dance's form and spirituality, if nothing else, simply by spending time there.

I liked the teacher in Bangalore, but she could not teach me until March (it was November), so I chose to study in the temple town of Chidambaram, Tamilnadu, a six-hour train journey

south of Chennai, and, as I have described, birthplace of bharatanatyam. I chose to learn with the priest, and, primarily, with the woman who grew up in a *dasi* family, Madam. Although I was not interested in an historical or comparative analysis of bharatanatyam in terms of the devadasi tradition, I was seduced by the way that Madam so obviously inhabited the dance, and felt the opportunity was one I could not pass up. Also, I held the words of my first teacher in high esteem. I trusted she would approve, and I trusted my body would absorb something unique to do with the dance by being there, and by spending time in the temple.

A small woman comes through the low doorway in a pink cotton sari. Madam, as I came to know her, is a quiet and unassuming woman with the brightness of a bird in her eyes, a large red *pottu* painted between her brows. Her skin is pale and golden and freshly open as the petals of her name, Kanakambujam, meaning 'Golden Lotus'. She is small and neat, her smile stained orange with betel, which she chewed with immaculate routine. Her conversation, which I cannot follow, is a stream of Tamil, punctuated with the sharp rhythms of a pushpanjali, or an alarippu (tha thai tham theyyam tha tha tham), and I hold on to these like old friends; my line of communication with her. She has a gentle presence and timid exterior teamed with a lively energy, a vehement independence and a wicked sense of humour.

In Chidambaram I settled into a daily routine based around my dance classes. Initially, I tried to attend classes with Madam in the small dance and music school in the town, but this proved impossible. Madam wanted to teach me privately, both because it was financially more lucrative for her, and because she was fearful of the attitudes of the school's directors regarding my status and her own. This was frustrating for me, because it restricted my involvement with the school, but I accepted Madam's wishes.

My classes took place in a tiny room in part of the traditional building where the priest lived. It had a stone floor, which is ideal for dancing bharatanatyam, and was barely big enough to take three paces.¹⁹ It was so small, in fact, that I had to face Madam diagonally across to make space for optimum movement. The room only had a tiny skylight, and I often found myself dancing in candlelight when the electricity failed—power cuts are a daily occurrence in Chidambaram. When repairs began on the roof, and I expressed my fear and dismay at not being able to dance, a space was cleared for me to practise in the kitchen of the house. I accepted all this as perfectly fine. In Edinburgh I had been accustomed to my teacher's

¹⁹ In many ways sprung floors are not ideal for Indian dance which requires a solid surface, such as a stone or concrete floor, where the feet can impact cleanly to produce crisp rhythms and a satisfying resistant feel for the dancer.

attitude where she accepted any space to teach and practise almost without question, and as her students, we did the same. We had danced in huge dance studios with sprung floors, mirrors and chandeliers, in small carpeted rooms in libraries, in crowded classrooms where we had to move chairs and tables to make a tiny space for ourselves, in cold church halls.

Madam taught me five days a week at times convenient for her, and/or suitably auspicious.²⁰ In addition, I had a daily *adavu* class supervised by the priest where we would go over dance items which Madam was teaching me, as well as basic exercises. In truth, Madam was somewhat unreliable, something I always forgave her for, although it caused me much disappointment. She was usually about an hour later than the time we had arranged and sometimes did not appear at all. Of course, on the one occasion that I was late for the class, she had arrived promptly and was already comfortably installed with a cup of Horlicks, smiling at my apologies. She was utterly focused on teaching me for the hour or two that we would practise, but also, I quickly realised, relished the chance to talk and gossip with the priest, whom she had looked after as a child. For the required hour or so following class I would sit watching and absorbing their conversation which was translated for me intermittently by the priest. Madam talked and chewed betel, kneading tobacco in her palm. I loved the chance to marvel at her animated conversation.

I visited the dance school as often as I could as an observer, but kept a very low profile with respect to Madam's wishes and did not become highly involved. Outside my dance classes, much of my life revolved around visiting the temple, which is central to the identity and character of the town, buying fruit at the market, writing, or passing the time of day with people. When I could, I spent time with my husband, whom I adore. On occasion there were dance or music performances within the temple complex. In Chidambaram, the temple is the focal point of social activity. People go to the temple to hang out and meet with friends and family, especially in the evenings. At this time, clusters of seated groups are scattered across the outer courtyard, the previously scorching flagstones providing a gentle and tolerable warmth in the cool night air under the stars. If a performance is taking place, the majority of the audience are these same people, who merely place themselves in the proximity of the stage to enjoy the occasion as part of their evening visit to the temple.

In addition, Chidambaram hosted a week-long dance festival in February, giving me the opportunity to immerse myself in a wealth of dance performances of a slightly more

²⁰ Madam usually abided by rules of auspiciousness in her daily life. Regarding dance, this involved starting to teach items on particular days at particular times, and completing them according to time-cycles. Payment was always given at auspicious times, and exact sums of money were inauspicious, so I always paid the agreed sum plus one.

formalised character. Occasional visits to Chennai also allowed me the chance to see a variety of dance shows. As the centre of bharatanatyam, Chennai has a plethora of dance performances, and it is usually possible to find a performance taking place somewhere every night. Chennai self-consciously hums with its connection with bharatanatyam, and my experience here was not only of watching dance, but also of gorging on the paraphernalia surrounding it. I bought silk saris, costume jewellery, bells, and paper jasmine flowers to use in a country where there is no fresh jasmine to decorate a dancer's hair.

In many ways, dancing in India was a lonely process. Due both to this and to my own personal intellectual interest, my work as a whole is drawn towards an analysis of the individual feelings that lend dance meaning, rather than a cultural or political social analysis of dance; which is not to say that feeling is not cultural or political, or that individuals are not social. In this respect,

there is reason to maintain that one's own experience of the process of gradual understanding—and indeed of misunderstanding—in the field is still both the means to comprehension and the source of authority. This authority may not be 'on' a particular culture, but will certainly be on the performative context in which action and interaction in general take place and make sense (Hastrup and Hervik 1994: 5).

Dancing in London was a more sociable time. I had connected with several dancers of about my age in and around London, many of whom had trained in India also, and used this time to consolidate and uncover shared experiences. Negotiating London was a new experience for me. Dancers travel considerable distances across the city to attend classes, which in the main take place in the evenings and at weekends. I attended classes in two places which apparently contrasted greatly both in their approach to dance and the students they attracted. One took place at The Place, a venue devoted to teaching and performing all forms of dance, with an emphasis on western contemporary forms. The bharatanatyam classes here are run under the auspices of a London based group, Akademi, dedicated to promoting 'South Asian Dance' in London's modern and competitive dance environment. In practice, students in this class are less connected to this organisation than to the teacher running the classes, Anusha Subramanyam.

My other classes took place at the Bhavan Centre, or Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 'Institute of Indian Culture' and the foremost school for teaching and promoting the Indian Arts, including dance, in London. All bharatanatyam teaching there is in the hands of the guru, Prakash Yadagudde, known affectionately as Guruji. The Bhavan Centre is a lively venue for hosting performances of dance and music, and London in general afforded me the

opportunity to attend a number of performances. These performances mainly took place in formal settings, and at both amateur and professional level. At Bhavan, they take place in an auditorium attached to the school, with a large stage and seating capacity. Dancers are both students from the school and invited artists, the former either performing arangetrams, or, having reached a higher level, giving benefit concerts for the school.

Fuller descriptions of these classes will emerge as the thesis progresses. Here, it is sufficient to say that in London, I engaged a more conscious side of my anthropological self and did not enter into the depth of relationships with my teachers that I was accustomed to. This was partly because the time I spent there was the shortest of my fieldwork sites, and partly because I was more wary of doing so, keenly trying to preserve my independence where I knew that accepting levels of control was perhaps more appropriate. This was not the case, however, in the actual moments that I was dancing. The feelings engaged here remained the same as ever and I learnt much from them.

fieldwork and value

With much of my fieldwork achieved in retrospect, I found myself in the position of re-evaluating the whole fieldwork process. For the three years that I was dancing prior to ‘real fieldwork’ I had taken no conventional fieldnotes. I had chatted constantly to my two closest dance friends about our experiences of learning bharatanatyam; I had performed alongside them, and shared much joy and grief with them. I had occasionally written informal poetic and fanciful observations about my dancing, particularly if my teacher requested it, and which reveal the emotion that dance aroused in me:

Somehow, to dance bharatanatyam is to discover a new way of living. Now, I dance in order to live, and when I dance, I live because I am feeling. Somewhere wrapped in the rhythms of my feet, channelling through my fingers, concealed in the film of my eye or in my parted lips, I find a new and graceful energy, and it is very small, but very bright. And though the brightness shines a moving energy, it is also something very still. Suddenly, I find it very necessary. Knowing it is there is enough to keep me dancing when it is so often hidden—when the floor pounds my heels too hard, or when the lines of my arms are broken and clumsy when they should be clean and elegant. If I only uncover a little, there is the energy of a kind of pure joy. To keep learning is to keep uncovering.

I quickly recognised these same kinds of attitudes in others also. I had entered into an intense relationship with the dance, and with my teacher, and was utterly absorbed with it on a number of levels, giving much of my time and energy to classes and performances. Dancers

have a tendency to become single-minded in many respects. They demand understanding friends, family and lovers.

As I discuss in detail in chapter two, the single-mindedness of dancers also clearly relates to the ways in which knowledge is presented and valued. This introduced a further element into the PhD process which I did not fully recognise initially, and which Wikan observes in a similar way in her own work on emotion in Bali where she writes: 'I...had to discard valued parts of myself' (1990: 270). I became sceptical about the value of academic knowledge; in many ways I did not really believe in it or value it. In turn, this encompassed an incomprehension of the value of reading academic texts to gain knowledge, which in some respects should have handicapped my first year of research, purportedly dedicated to a literature review of my subject. This I did, but with difficulty, as my real interest lay with learning dance, and the two disciplines of dance and anthropology, contrary to my expectations, seemed remarkably incompatible. Throughout, I cannot claim that I was in any way simply an 'interested (in both senses of the word) sojourner' (Geertz 1973: 20 fn. 4).

These two instances—the failure to keep a systematic written record during my initial three years of dance training, and my inability to value conventional academic learning—have proved to be among my most valuable resources. They provide me with the means to argue for a complete conceptual leap in order to fully appreciate the nature of learning dance, as one which I inadvertently made as I became more absorbed in *bharatanatyam*. In this way, my work takes a profoundly phenomenological approach where experience and 'being-in-the world' is prioritised (cf. Csordas 1989, 1993, 1994; Jackson 1989, 1996), and in a way that:

demands a turning back to the world of lived human experience and taking what people do and say seriously. This does not mean that they are taken as expressions or idioms of something else...Rather, the forms of life encountered are explored for their assumptions, logic and so on. This demands that the ethnographer must open himself or herself completely to the possibilities of experience and understanding that are presented for inspection (Kapferer 1991 [1983]: xx).²¹

It follows Feld's suggestion that 'Illuminating experience...can only be accomplished honestly if ethnographers let themselves feel and be felt as emotionally involved people who have an openly nondetached attitude about that which they seek to understand' (1982: 236). As shall be explored fully in chapter two, this, in turn, prompts us to reform our attitude to knowledge, appropriately described by Daniel in relation to Tamil concepts: 'Knowledge about "the other" and knowledge about "oneself" may appear to be different and distinct. In

²¹ See also the connected discussion on phenomenological approaches in chapter two.

the Tamil world view, however, knowledge about the other, or object knowledge, is but an extension of self-knowledge' (1984: 234).

Throughout the thesis, therefore, I draw on things remembered and not written, as well as things remembered and written (fieldnotes) (cf. Hastrup 1994). Memory becomes an important resource, not simply as things past, but as things stored in the individual as present.²² It is not Geertz's inscribed fieldnotes, where the ethnographer 'turns [social discourse] from a passing event, which exists only in its own moment of occurrence into an account, which exists in its inscriptions and can be reconsulted' (1973: 19). Neither is it the simple application of memory to events, but, rather, it is a full appreciation of the way that experience prompts change; memory stored in the body and emotions is a series of moments of becoming and can be recognised and used to inform the ethnographer.

This is undoubtedly the process of all fieldwork. Some of the most valuable insights are derived in feeling and experience which are not recorded in writing, not only because writing changes their nature, but because they are not immediately or consciously recognisable, often through their relationship to time and self. Time and experience contribute to a seamless accumulation of self, which can only be recognised at certain junctures, instances which Grimshaw refers to as 'decisive moments' (1999: 124). Being in India was one such juncture, as is the crossing of many different boundaries in the anthropological process. Here, then, we have clues as to how it becomes possible to attempt an anthropology of emotion through the medium of experience. Jackson makes an invaluable contribution to this vision of anthropology, emphasising 'radical empiricism' (1989) and 'intersubjectivity' (1998) as approaches which lend the discipline both insight and meaning. As we shall see in chapter four, the aesthetic theory on which dance is built gives us a further guide, allowing us to assimilate both 'the structural and the hermeneutic' (Feld 1982: 15).²³

In my work, emotion is understood as something formulated through a variety of means and circumstances. It is a way that anthropologists 'can add resonance to [their] depictions of people's realities' (Maschio 1998: 85). By monitoring changes in themselves, ethnographers

²² Mitchell importantly observes that memory is also collective: 'Because we learn in a social setting, our memories of that setting are also social. Our memories as ethnographers are bound up in the memories of our informants, whose semiotic, practical and emotional knowledge is bound up with ours. When we write about those memories we must therefore acknowledge the collectivity from which they come' (1997: 92).

²³ Feld argues that these two approaches, personified by Levi-Strauss (1966) and Geertz (1973), have been perceived by anthropology as incompatible. In his work on Kaluli song and aesthetics, Feld suggests, with reference to Hymes (1974), that the two may be used in conjunction to describe 'how symbols activate meaningful activity' (Feld 1982: 15).

become sharpened to the possibilities inherent in the creation of emotion, and of the ways in which these come about. As Leavitt argues after Jackson (1989), 'using one's own body in fieldwork...yields knowledge that is otherwise unavailable' (1996: 519). And as Jackson himself writes:

we make ourselves experimental subjects and treat our experiences as primary data. Experience in this sense becomes a mode of experimentation, of testing and exploring the ways in which our experiences conjoin or connect us with others, rather than the ways they set us apart (1989: 4).

Likewise, Okely (1994) formulates an approach which advocates and incorporates vicarious and creative understanding to surmise others' experience. In Wikan's words, one can 'be subjective in the sense of deploying oneself and one's own, always limited and partial, sources of insight—a particular vantage point' (1990: 267). But additionally, we must not unwittingly place the nature of understandings gained in this way as limiting and limited—as 'too subjective', maybe—thereby inviting a void in our analysis which inhibits us from writing about the emotions and experiences which imbue fieldwork situations. In this spirit, I read Wikan's continuing observation that 'we might as well acknowledge that one's vantage point is necessarily always particular, whether we deal with 'large' or 'small' issues. Which issue is which is always a matter of perspective' (op. cit.).

We must look for, and trust, a method of analysis that does not confine our ability to frame the experience of emotion. In the closing pages of her inspirational work on sentiment in a Bedouin society, Abu-Lughod briefly addresses the issue of experience. Rightly, she argues that '[a]nthropologists commonly assume that describing the ideology or the culture is equivalent to describing the behavior and experience of members of society' (1986: 255). In work about experience, then, we need to be conscious ourselves, and to make clear to readers, the ways in which this is the case or not, and to theorise about methodology which make such conclusions possible. In this way, we become less anxious about talking about emotional experience in relation to cultural and personal forms. '[E]xperiences in intimate life' (ibid.: 257) become less 'impossible to know' (op. cit.), and more possible to describe and to prescribe importance to in an articulate way.

In my own methodological analysis to this end, I characterise intuition as our most useful tool. Intuition may be recognised as a device falling neatly on the edge of consciousness; a 'feeling' belonging to mind and body, and thereby particularly appropriate within the whole analysis. With the growth and development of emotional experience over time, the anthropologist develops a greater sense of intuition to understand the contexts in which they

are working. Okely (1994) particularly connects this with sensory experience. It is a tool that is both intangible and coherent in the way it falls squarely between the anthropologist's consciousness and unconsciousness. This quality itself is an important reference point and will re-emerge throughout the thesis.

Initially, as part of this process, I put empathy, as the sympathetic ascertain another's feelings according to one's own projection, aside. Not because empathy does not exist or is not possible, but because it is subject to assumptions which may be misplaced and misrepresentative, especially when applied cross-culturally (Lynch 1990). It assumes an emotional basis for a connection between self and other which can only be pitched at a personal, and often one-sided, level. It is not enough that 'empathy happens'²⁴ (Leavitt 1996: 530).

To discern emotion, then, I suggest we can use a particular intuition—let us call it informed intuition—over and above empathetic strategy. Further, if we recognise it as an important methodological tool, we can develop it to inform and generate ways of understanding. In doing so, it is the intention to encompass 'the most potent investigative and interpretive weapons in the anthropologist's armoury: his or her own experience and consciousness' and used 'in a rigorous and controlled fashion' (Cohen 1994: 4). Contrary to Cohen's later dichotomy (*ibid.*: 89), 'intuition' and 'evidence' become identified. Within this, however, intuition necessarily possesses 'a background condition of indeterminacy' (Csordas 1990: 150), where we undoubtedly 'recognise the indeterminate as a positive phenomenon' (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 6). It is in this defined sense that intuition and experience are mystified, not in Clifford's more general sense which renders them 'difficult to say very much about...one has [them] or not' (Clifford 1983: 128), or in Geertz's (1973) flippant classification of intuition with alchemy.

Again, a useful analogy to this theory is that of emotion in *bharatanatyam*, which is rooted in the ideal situation whereby the dancer communicates an aesthetic and generalised emotion in such a way that it vibrates in the watcher, who experiences it in a personal, but not necessarily individual, sense. Indeed, Lynch observes that 'Indians describ[e] emotions in terms of social situations or practices rather than in terms of individual feelings' (1990: 27). My work explores the relationship between emotion perceived as 'general' and 'personal' through the process of learning dance emotion, where emotions must be diagnosed cross-

²⁴ Whilst I value many of Leavitt's observations on 'meaning and feeling', I problematise the notion of empathy more substantially. He characterises 'the problem with empathy' being 'not that it involves feelings [with which I agree] but that it assumes that first impressions are true [where I think it assumes more]' (1996: 530).

culturally. It is not 'experimental' or 'deductive', but ethnographic (cf. Appadurai 1990: 93), where experience is *used* (cf. Mitchell 1997). Within the confines of the dance context, people are driven towards new ways of experiencing. Unlike Lynch, however, I do not reject feeling as irrelevant to understanding emotion in this context.²⁵

All this said, the distinction I draw between intuition and empathy need not always be a necessary or useful one. Coomaraswamy, for example, chooses to use notions of both to describe the Indian artistic process. 'Rasa,' he says, 'is tasted—beauty is felt—only by empathy' (1918: 32), and the religious-artistic experience is 'an intuition of reality and of identity' (ibid.: 35-6). Thus, I advocate informed intuition as the most appropriate *anthropological* tool. Empathy and intuition, on the other hand, become a useful combined resource to resurrect embodiments of memory and imagination in the contemplation of art, be it dance or poetry. In this respect, a distinction is made between persons and art objects (which may also be people), between anthropology and experience, between indiscriminate empathy as an unhelpful means of understanding others, and empathy as a way of causing emotional contemplation to resonate with personal experience.

In the study of emotion, Lyon argues that 'the limitations of the anthropological application of the concepts of culture and symbol become most apparent...Words are seen as premier symbols' (1995: 245). Valuable knowledge, however, is as we know, often manifest in other ways (Bourdieu 1977; Johnson 1987; Bloch 1990; Okely 1994). It is found in bodies and movement, in embodied memory, in facial expression or animated gesture, in smell and taste, sound and rhythm, in dreams. Words themselves may mask or imply other meanings and possibilities (Okely 1994; Kersenboom 1995), and silence must be recognised and listened to with care (Gal 1991; Harvey 1994). In dance training, students develop a particular intuition within the learning process over time. They know that many things go unsaid, and that they must observe, listen, interpret and act, and they learn to convey emotion through symbols, of which words play only a part.

All these embodied senses are easily and substantially recognised by anthropologists, and vested in the very nature of fieldwork. I do not suggest otherwise. I *do* suggest, however, that words are easy to fall back on, particularly as 'evidence'. '[A]s thinkers, and as ordinary human beings, we have an ontological propensity to argue on political and social issues on the basis of the adequacy of evidence' (Obeyesekere 1990: xxii). Words have a greater semblance of truth and reality and consciousness that provide a safe place in which to nest

²⁵ See chapter four.

understanding. As informant's words, they can place the fieldworker safely beyond subjective conjecture. Neither are words always adequate, although neither is it always adequately meaningful to confer this status on them, as will become clear in chapter two. It is a matter of redressing the 'balance between words and worlds' (Hastrup and Hervik 1994: 5), and evaluating the relationship between them.

writing up and value

It's a kind of emotional imagination that you absolutely need to be creative—to be able to personally invest in your characters. That's the technical side. Beyond that, I think that writers can't be better than their readers—writing is a collaborative act of the imagination.

Jim Dodge.

Yet, all this said, I am indeed writing, and since leaving London, no longer have the opportunity to dance. The balance has tipped, and I am more deeply involved in academic knowledge than I have been for a long time. Writing and analysing, it is easy to be seduced by this other knowledge, especially by the process of book learning and the accumulation and generation of ideas. It is also to some extent necessary in order to sincerely complete my debt to the discipline as an academic endeavour—the 'pre-condition of scholarship' (Hastrup and Hervik 1994: 5).

As time has progressed, however, I try to listen still to my heartfelt intellect, which remains much influenced by the dance, and accept and convey some of the core issues which it teaches anthropology. They cannot be understood in a conventionally academic anthropological way, but must appeal to another sense (which I argue is ultimately equally anthropological) where the reader at times acknowledges a creative emotional engagement with the text. '[I]t is perfectly possible to play on one's own and one's reader's emotions to attempt to convey those of the people under study, not only on their meanings but also in their feelings' (Leavitt 1996: 518). To this end, my work is presented in different genres. In part of my thesis, I present my ideas according to the conventions of anthropological discourse. In the other, I present words as poetry in order to appeal to a different sense. I ask the reader to value fully both types of understanding. '[P]ictures, poetry and every work of art produce no effect save on souls prepared to receive them' (Croce cited in Coomaraswamy 1918: 33).

Writing is an important continuation of the meanings that come to us through fieldwork. In this way, ethnography not only *becomes* text, but *is* text; it is a necessary part of the processes described earlier which implicate the anthropologist in their work. It is not a

narcissistic project, but one which uses personal experience as an active participant in ascertaining knowledge. It is in this spirit that Pandolfo (1997) uses her dreams as important referents, and that I advocate using intuitive skills and reflexive moments to engage with meaning. Pandolfo writes: 'Coming to terms with [this dream (my dream?)]—as an event, but also as a poetic allusion—means for me to raise the question of the status and the possibility of ethnography, of autobiography, in fact, of writing' (1997: 172). She continues:

Receiving the "locus of the other inside my language, in the space in my imagination" means that neither "my" language nor "my" imagination will return to me as a piece of belonging; that the *auto-* of the autobiography and the *ethno-* of the ethnography will necessarily be displaced...It is precisely the distance, the gap, the "energy that furrows the space between us," that makes possible the opening of an heterographic space. Neither ethnographic, nor autobiographic (op. cit.).

Although it is often asserted that writing is restrictive, particularly in the expression of the embodied arts such as dance that I deal with, I draw on the interconnectedness of the arts in Indian aesthetic theory, and use writing poetically.²⁶ In this way, words become less restrictive and more appropriate. In a process which parallels the language of dance, poetry is used as 'a deviation from the norm of expression that enhances expressiveness' (Gell 1999a: 156) where words are used to 'recast...experience in language that can have a parallel effect' (Leavitt 1996: 530). Thereby, they elicit some measure of apt understanding. As Wikan comments on her own writing process:

Balinese friends...steadily impressed upon me that my task was to create resonance...between you and them. I must bring the reader, or the audience, in touch with the stories I tell, said they. Otherwise there would be no empathy, no compassion...Nor would there be understanding, for understanding presupposes this quality of resonance (1990: 268).

Poetry may be read with intuition, empathy, and imagination. It can connect personal and collective emotions, imbuing them with experiential meaning, and can recall memories felt only on the cusp of consciousness. It takes its place in processes of communication.²⁷ 'The spectator's appreciation of beauty depends on the effort of his own imagination' (Coomaraswamy 1918: 33).

²⁶ For the attention given to the way ethnography is written, I acknowledge the work of Clifford and Marcus (1986) and other authors in their wake. Anthropology has always been, of course, a literary exercise, as they discuss (see also Spencer 1989).

²⁷ Crucial in validating this process is Kersenboom's work (1991) which, with reference to Tamil poetry, connects text, and most importantly, meaning, with practice and performance. She stresses the importance, also, of communication in the whole endeavour of creating meaning—'practice and interaction as conditions for human knowledge' (ibid.: 226). These ideas, which underpin my approach to and presentation of my work, are particularly discussed in chapter two.

The thesis falls into two books. Book One consists of five chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter introduces concepts of art and the aesthetic, particularly in relation to the aesthetic theory of dance. I use Gell's work on art to frame our understandings of art anthropologically and consider how this can inform our comprehension of beauty and experience. In chapter two, I discuss how dance knowledge is formulated. I consider the different ways in which knowledge becomes meaningful. Using anthropological fieldwork and the experience of learning dance as a baseline, I suggest that emotional and embodied knowledge manifest in dancing requires us to make a conceptual leap in understanding how knowledge is meaningfully acquired and presented. Placing language in this frame, I also discuss the different ways that language may be used and understood. The chapter unavoidably closely relates to methodological ideas outlined in the introduction.

Chapter three is a pivotal chapter. Its central position asks the reader firstly to draw relationships with the surrounding chapters, and secondly, to appreciate the unfolding nature of the work, which mirrors the many levels in which dance unfolds, both to dance students and to audiences. In it, I explore the ways in which the relationship of gurukulam is present in the student-teacher relationships that I witnessed and experienced in fieldwork. I explain how traditional teaching structures are central to the way dance is conceived and emotion is constructed, but also how they are necessarily adapted by dancers who teach and learn in non-traditional and cross-cultural situations, and what this implies.

In chapter four, I focus more fully on the ways that emotion is constructed and conceived in bharatanatyam. I consider how dance emotion becomes experienced emotion, and how personal and social processes contribute to this. As part of this discussion, I uncover possible ways that the symbols and imagery used in bharatanatyam become relevant to those dancers who have no experience of the social and cultural contexts of which they are a part. Finally, in chapter five, I discuss performance contexts. I consider whether rasa theory is relevant in the experience of dance performances, and how dancers choose to present their performances in view of the preconceptions that audiences may have about bharatanatyam. I use Daniel's work (1984, 1996) on Peircean theories of the sign to aid the understanding of performance, particularly in its relationship to time, and to the experience of beauty. Dance becomes uniquely implicated in these processes.

Book Two consists of a number of poems, written in response to the need to explore ways of using text to elicit appropriate and different responses. In this way, we begin to value the alternative conceptions of meaningful knowledge which bharatanatyam introduces us to, and

which can closely connect us to the emotional and felt senses so central to this project. As I mention in a short introduction to Book Two, the illustrations therein are likewise intended not purely as descriptive devices, but as images to be absorbed and interpreted as poetry. Book Two may be read in sequence in the thesis, or may be turned to at any moment, for any length of time, where meanings will emerge in different ways according to how much of Book One has been read.

Looking at my work as a whole, I find it is ultimately not so much ‘about’ bharatanatyam, as about very particular aspects of bharatanatyam, and about anthropology. My comparatively short and limited experience of dancing does not give me an authoritative voice about the form, and I do not wish to claim it. I respect that in so many ways, there are other dancers much better placed than me to do so. Instead, I sincerely try to represent my own experience of dancing bharatanatyam, and the ways in which this can contribute to an anthropology of emotion and experience. It is in this spirit that I ask my thesis to be read and enjoyed.

Thus it is that art is nearer to life than any fact can be.

Coomaraswamy 1918

BOOK ONE

Chapter 1

Pushpanjali: Dance as Art

No art, it seems to me, so clearly emphasises the deep aesthetic impulse inside us all. Each time we see a man walk on the wire, a part of us is up there with him. Unlike performances in the other arts, the experience of the high wire is direct, unmediated, simple, and it requires no explanation whatsoever. The art is the thing itself, a life in its most naked delineation. And if there is beauty in this, it is because of the beauty we feel inside ourselves.

Paul Auster, *The Red Notebook*.

I relate this chapter, which discusses the artistic and aesthetic potential in bharatanatyam, to a pushpanjali. Pushpanjali is an item placed at the very beginning of a performance, often before alarippu, where the dancer offers flowers to god as part of a short choreography. Flowers are powerful symbols in bharatanatyam aesthetic imagery, and thus pushpanjali seems an appropriate point at which to open our discussion. This chapter is designed to introduce the reader to the theoretical and emotional aspects of the bharatanatyam aesthetic in a dancer's experience of her art. My analysis opens with a general consideration of how art is represented in anthropological debates placed alongside aspects of Indian aesthetic theory and of everyday Indian aesthetics. I then consider these with regard to definitions of beauty and the nature of a personal aesthetic, both of which imbue the process of becoming a dancer. In the light of these findings, the chapter concludes with a discussion which understands my work in terms of dance as art, and its place in anthropology, with particular reference to theories suggested by Gell (1998). The chapter is intended both to introduce and to frame the ensuing chapters, providing an awareness which enables a fuller understanding of issues emerging throughout the thesis.

Theorising Art

constituting art and the aesthetic

Anthropological complexities surround definitions of 'art' and 'aesthetic' as concepts, both individually and in the relationship they bear to each other. '[I]t is generally recognized that

aesthetics concerns more than art and that art is about more than aesthetics' (Coote 1992: 245). Indeed, it has been argued on several occasions that no such categories exist cross-culturally in such a way that broad meanings may be attached to each (see e.g. Overing 1996; Gow 1996; Gell 1998) and Gell (1992) rejects aesthetics as a useful concept in defining art as an anthropological category at all. Anthropologists, therefore, must be wary of arbitrarily using such terms without closely related definitions, otherwise they risk 'inventions which misrepresent cases employing different categories and systems of discrimination' (Hughes-Freeland 1997a: 473). Yet whilst I sympathise with arguments against the use of such categories, I nevertheless find the terminology important and useful for understanding of *bharatanatyam* as a cross-cultural form.¹

In dance contexts, concepts of art and the aesthetic exist at various levels of meaning. As with the experience of watching dance, immediate interpretations combine with more layered and complex understandings. Both can usefully contribute to our analysis. As I talked to people involved with *bharatanatyam*, both as spectators and as dancers, they used the terms simultaneously, with relative ease, and with weight and importance. Such terms exist as an important aid to the communication and articulation of a dancer's activity. They give place and value to an art form that in many ways is so *displaced*, and become a useful means of expression which is at once simple and meaningful, providing an anchor both for those listening and for those talking. Ultimately, I will argue, they also provide a basis for experiencing. Thus, whilst I fully appreciate the value of analytically treating 'art' and 'aesthetic' independently, as Coote (1992: 246) argues after Maquet (1979), Zangwill (1986) and Diffey (1986), it is not necessary or appropriate to always do so here. We are indeed concerned with 'qualities of perception' (Coote 1992: 247), but where art and the aesthetic are perceived and presented as interlinked, and artworks can be many things (Gell 1999b).

The *Natyasastra*,² supports this usage in the way it *combines* art and the aesthetic. Drawing on its theories, dance teachers and gurus convert the written word to the spoken words of their teaching, whilst concurrently reflecting nuances of their own teacher's understanding of artistic aesthetic principles. Written and oral traditions become confused, and 'language' exists as an important nexus of interpretation. In Bharata's treatise, the *Natyasastra*, we see a

¹ Marcus Banks points out the tendency, when discussing aesthetics as a cross-cultural category, to focus on non-state societies at the expense of societies such as India that have developed parallel theories of the aesthetic: 'The fact that the arts of India, for example, are fully aestheticized within their regional context, quite independently of European contact, surely exemplifies the separate development of a category of aesthetics' (1996: 381). I tend to agree with this observation, and it is perhaps for this reason that the term may be productively used cross-culturally in my work, and as a comparative tool.

² See Introduction.

‘fifth Veda’ created and dedicated to outlining the arts, including dance, music, poetry, architecture and painting, as a way to understanding a singular spiritual aesthetic. This emphasis on combined forms is expressed in the way people talk about *bharatanatyam*. Teachers always stress the importance of a dancer studying music to enhance her appreciation of dancing, or of studying temple reliefs to acquire a fuller understanding of form. Whilst my first teacher did not readily accept the usefulness or possibility of effectively writing about dance, she encouraged any writing to take the form of poetry.

In these representations, the aesthetic is closely associated with the spiritual, and with the experience of *rasa*, ‘which is the equivalent of Beauty or Aesthetic Emotion in the strict sense of the philosopher’ (Coomaraswamy 1918: 30). Knowledge of the aesthetic is experiencing the divine, and, through the *Natyasastra*, art makes this possible for those otherwise excluded. With the emphasis in art placed on *rasa*, the aesthetic is associated with emotion, and ultimately with the experience of divine bliss and unity with god. We must therefore be able to take a composite and unbounded view of the aesthetic, which, because it has dance as its vehicle, does not ‘draw the line between an anthropology of aesthetics and an anthropology of the emotions or of the body’ (Born 1996: 283). Additionally, it embraces an anthropology of ritual and religion.³

Art in the *Natyasastra* is characterised by its exacting and specific qualities, which may be learned by performers and audiences alike. ‘Dance is pure science,’ we were told in the first *bharatanatyam* class I attended. Teachers often emphasise the ‘scientific’ qualities of the dance in class. They do so with a double agenda. Whilst it is primarily a straightforward translation into English of the Sanskrit word *sastra*, they enjoy the connotations it implies with regard to western science, particularly in teaching students unfamiliar with Hindu discourses. In this way they seek to challenge any preconceived notions of dance as ‘airy-fairy’, rather presenting it as highly structured and codified, and by implication, exacting and challenging to the student. *Outside* the teaching context, however, representations *do* identify dance as art, both to suggest aspects of spiritual aspirations and in formulating bids for funding opportunities.

Bharatanatyam is highly technical and explicitly presented with close attention to detail—the impact of the feet on the floor, the angle of the head, the shape and dynamism of each *mudra* (hand gesture), the arch of an eyebrow, the creation of aesthetic emotion. Theory is translated into a practice where attention is paid to every body-part, every muscle, whether

³ I address this aspect more particularly in chapter five.

visible or internal. We quickly realise that the aesthetic is vested in a 'scientific art', and more importantly, that the aesthetic is a felt quality, ultimately associated with beauty. *Rasa* represents 'experiences that can be "tasted" in art outside their real-life situations of occurrence...and are not reducible to their definitions' (Leavitt 1996: 522). It is also a quality that exists in communication.

art as cultural politics

Hughes-Freeland, working in the context of Javanese dance,⁴ emphasises that this art-form, despite what it purports to be, is framed by political associations:

[Art] is not a cultural given. Rather, it is used in the processes of cultural production to define appropriateness, and entails struggles for power and identity...Despite the Indonesian ideological separation of culture and politics, this case will furnish evidence of a politicization of aesthetics (1997a: 474).

She goes on to further clarify this by stating how many dance events 'present art as culture, not politics, but ultimately they are cultural politics' (ibid.: 490).

Bharatanatyam worldwide is undoubtedly highly politicised (see Meduri 1988; Gaston 1991 & 1996), especially as an indicator of culture, class and identity. At its conception, in the establishment of Kalakshetra by brahmin dancer Rukmini Devi, and in the famous devadasi counter-figure of Balasaraswati, we see very clearly how 'actors as well as analysts reconstitute categories by separation and conjunction, depending on chance and circumstance' (Hughes-Freeland 1997a: 475). Further, the 'Indian aesthetic' as a concept is placed against a nineteenth and early twentieth century political agenda to intellectualise dance and to discipline the experience of *rasa*. Meduri draws our attention to the more scholarly representations of dance which resourced both Bharata's *Natyasastra* and the reworking of it by eleventh-century saint Abhinavagupta where

Abhinavagupta commented on the *Natyasastra* in the sophisticated language of psychology and ontology, being and awareness. His language, springing from a certain specific world-view, was given to abstraction and phenomenology, to art as a state of mind (Meduri 1988: 8).⁵

⁴ Javanese dance is particularly closely associated with *bharatanatyam* and other Indian dance forms in origin, object, and through sculptural depictions (cf. Iyer 1999). Comparative lack of facial expression (Hughes-Freeland 1997a) as a means to describing feeling, however, is an important difference. Both dance forms aspire to tasting *rasa*.

⁵ She continues: 'It was the later scholars who inquired into the psychology and ontology of the art experience, who elevated dance and drama to the status of a high religion (*vedanta*), perceiving it as

In contrast, she argues, the devadasi tradition 'fused belief with practice' (op. cit.), and emerged as part of an oral tradition, engaging with change and adaptation without the same recourse to intellectual or written parameters.

In these ways it is perfectly possible and relevant to present an analysis that clearly relates dance to 'forms of social practice' (Hughes-Freeland 1997a: 473) and to the political production of culture. But similarly 'social', is to emphasise dance as art in contexts which engender emotion, and which play a part in the personal relationship a dancer has to her art-form. Such presentations of the form in cross-cultural contexts define it in a way equally relevant to anthropologists in the creation of meanings. In my experience, contemporary Indian dancers draw on a complete history of the dance, encouraged by their own interests and those of their teacher. It may include understandings and renditions of the *Natyasastra* and of the *Abhinaya Darpana*; it may draw on the received memory or romantic notions of the devadasis; it may image itself in the temple or on the stage; it may be purely born out of the knowledge passed from teacher to student and nothing else.⁶ If 'to speak of art is to speak of representations: their production, their form, their reception' (Hughes-Freeland 1997a: 473), we must include the representations that artists make to and of themselves. Following this premise, it is helpful to see *bharatanatyam* existing as art and to examine the colours of such a conception, whilst accepting that it is also created according to cultural or political agendas. Neither makes it any less 'art'.

By understanding through objective theories of Indian aesthetics what art subjectively *is*, and through anthropological ideas what it analytically *may be*, we can hopefully form a composite and representative analysis. Further, we do so with reference to *bharatanatyam* in a variety of contexts which themselves represent situations in which 'art' exists, thereby acting as invaluable directives. In this way, discussions addressing the existence of art as a cross-cultural category or as politically motivated furnish us with a vision of art that can provide helpful angles to our analysis, but which is most informative if used with subtle appreciation of its existence in cross-cultural contexts.

an experience that embodied transcendental knowledge, cosmic oneness, and religious concentration' (Meduri 1988: 8).

⁶ Examples of these processes will emerge throughout the following chapters.

judgement and discrimination

References to 'beauty' and 'the beautiful' are prevalent in dance contexts,⁷ and particularly in reference to 'things Indian'. Each time something is said to be beautiful, it is said with depth and meaning. It is used in reference to images of flowers, mountains or divinities, to music and architecture, or to a particular dancer, seemingly with little discrimination. The smallest piece of tacky jewellery is beautiful, as is the most fundamental aspect of a god or goddess. More importantly, beauty is danced. When describing something beautiful, a dancer must show it in her whole being. Here, she subtly differentiates beauty. She pictures an image before her and really believes how beautiful it is. An audience sees it in her eyes, through an expression that is primarily taught but personally imbued. 'What we mean by creative art...has no necessary connection with novelty of subject...Creative art is art that reveals beauty' (Coomaraswamy 1918: 44). In dance vocabulary, and stemming from Indian theories of the aesthetic, beautiful things are not a matter of opinion, they are a given. A dancer develops this sense of beauty alongside her own aesthetic judgements, which may remain separate from those cultivated in her as dancer. Equally, the two may at times become fused in a combined sense of personal aesthetic.

This view of beauty contrasts with Gow's observation that 'the Western aesthetic simply discriminates, and any appeal to it invites judgement' (1996: 272). Pausing for a moment, let us consider how this highlights the paradoxical position in which we find ourselves concerning the anthropological endeavour. As Weiner observes, 'judgement is central to aesthetics and marginal to anthropology' (1994: 32 cited in Hughes-Freeland 1997a: 473). Here, anthropology places the western aesthetic appreciation and that of the *Natyasastra* in the same light. Theories about beauty—all theories about beauty—reflect the partiality of aesthetics. 'To demonstrate the expression of an aesthetic judgement is not to demonstrate that this aesthetic takes the same form in all cultures' (Layton 1981: 15). Aware of this, anthropologists rightly reserve judgement in their examination of art, thereby allaying any inherent presumptions about art inherited by their particular social consciousness. Such is the task of anthropology whatever its field. We are not in the business of looking for aesthetic truisms.

⁷ Whilst acknowledging the existence of philosophical inquiries into the nature of beauty with regard to the development of western thought, I choose to primarily refer instead to how the concept of beauty is manifest in the Indian dance context.

Given that we know this, however, a theory exemplified particularly in Bourdieu's study of 'taste' in French society (1984), my work takes a different direction, based on the experience of dancing as fieldwork and of fieldwork as multi-sited. It is not about delineating 'art' in particular cultural settings to reach conclusions such as those described above. Nor is it foremost about drawing comparisons about the nature of art and aesthetics in 'different cultures'. As Feld, working on Kaluli song says: 'the issue seemed to be not whether Kaluli 'have aesthetics' in an objective, reverifiable sense, but rather how to describe the quality of experience they feel and the quality of my relation to it' (1982: 233). On this basis, we can understand on a phenomenological level, that aesthetic judgement may be learnt, and use this as a beginning rather than an end. 'People are socialized into a world of sensation which in turn affects the quality of an experience or the way an object is experienced' (Morphy 1996: 258), and as Witkin observes, '[a]rt is...an important resource for thinking and making experience' (1995: x).

The challenge for us is to appreciate the content of aesthetic judgement propounded in bharatanatyam—the processes by which it may be acquired and how it feels, revealing both a 'taste of reflection' and a 'taste of sense' (Bourdieu 1984: 488).⁸ 'Beauty, then, is not in the object...It is a property of the perception of certain qualities in the object that the beholder has come to regard, by virtue of enculturation, as beautiful' (Green 1977: 397). The issue as I present it is multifold. Whilst on the one hand I am not encouraging the reader to believe that aesthetic truisms exist, I am, on the other, asking them to enter into an understanding of the nature of truisms particular to bharatanatyam.

constituting beauty

The creation of an Indian aesthetic is a complicated issue for dancers who have no daily experience of many of the images used in descriptive dance pieces—in natya and nritya in particular, but also in the more general expression of nritta 'in which the hand gestures don't mean anything, but only want to be "beautiful"' (Varley 1998: 272). Dance imagery draws on many images, creating a succession of fused landscapes. We see the natural landscape in

⁸ Because my primary objective is not to provide a comprehensive historical analysis of the emergence of bharatanatyam, I have ignored many issues pertinent to this subject with regard to the two strands of bharatanatyam associated with Balasaraswati and Rukmini Devi. As outlined by Meduri (1988), and described in the Introduction to this thesis, these two schools of thought were respectively portrayed in terms of 'the vulgar' and 'the sublime' according to intellectual judgements of the day. Clearly, they do respectively represent Bourdieu's 'sense of taste' and 'sense of reflection'. Such divisions and attitudes are still present to some extent in the culturally politicised aspect of the bharatanatyam scene referred to earlier in the chapter. I hope my work gives a fair appraisal of the situation within the contemporary Indian dancer as presented in my fieldwork contexts, and as described by Meduri later in her article.

cascading descriptions of mountains, flowers, birds and rivers; the human landscape where young women prepare to meet their lovers or mothers play with their small children; the religious landscape, in stories from Hindu mythology, scenes from temple worship, and in the evocation of individual relationships with deities. Each student can only know and formulate these scenes using the resources granted to her by her experience and by her memories. Further, such resources often resound in daily and lived experiences.

For those students learning dance in comparatively ‘displaced’ environments, there is no apparent continuity between dance and daily life—as experienced to a greater extent by devadasis, or by students of Kalakshetra and other schools where dance is taught as part of a complete lifestyle. I will argue this to be the case for many aspects of the dance. With regard to the aesthetic, continuities that do exist clearly vary according to the many dance contexts and life situations in which individual dancers find themselves. An example of two extremes is the world of the devadasi, as I glimpsed in Madam, and the experience of, say, myself, as a student learning in Scotland with no concrete apprehension of India prior to learning dance. In between, there are many possibilities—the young students at Bhavan who are Londoners of Indian origin, visit temple for worship with their parents, go home to a meal of *iddli sambar*,⁹ hold memories of trips to India to visit relatives; the English girl who grew up in Madurai, Tamilnadu, played with her Indian counterparts, chattering in Tamil, wearing the colours of Indian dyes; the mature student who takes up bharatanatyam with travelling images of Rajasthan in her mind’s eye.

Daily aesthetics in India are a sensual cacophony, exemplified by temple worship. Temple shrines emanate the sense of the visually beautiful in connection with the divine. *Murtis* (images of the deities) are often obscured under layers of rich silk and garlands, swathed in the smell of incense. The bathing rituals (*abhisheka*) resonate with the same transient, transformative and performative qualities as dance. They use beautiful substances—honey, milk, water, rice, jaggery, flowers. All contain the aesthetic quality of *rasa* which imbues not only the deity, but also those watching, with a certain sweetness. A culminative clanging of bells, warbling squeal of the temple clarinet, the beating of drums, take the worshipper into all aspects of aesthetic feeling, which are at once artistic and religious.

As the devotee takes *prasada*, these beautiful substances become internalised, made body, and thus truly embody the conceptual link between *rasa* and taste in the form of food. Taking ourselves away from the temple into the context of dance performance, food often emerges

⁹ A dish of steamed rice pancakes with an accompanying sauce.

as part of the performance event and acts as a functional part of a total aesthetic occasion. At Bhavan, for example, an extended interval always takes place where snacks and drinks are provided. People crowd and chat balancing paper cups and plates, eyes roving towards a table piled with sweets and sauces. We are reminded of the importance of sharing food, the character of food itself and the importance of taste. In the way that prasada is food at its most auspicious, and present in dance as part of ritual performance, food is also present as part of secular dance performances as auspicious occasions.

Conversely, placing inappropriate or impure food alongside a dance event can effect the beauty in and surrounding the dance. This food does not enhance people's experience of taste in a way that complements or creates the beauty they see before them. The only time my first teacher expressed doubts about doing piecemeal charity events followed one evening when we performed at a posh dinner themed on 'the Raj'. Here, we danced whilst waiters obliviously wove between us laden with platters, often of dishes containing meat, and in front of an audience drinking alcohol. The way in which food formed part of this performance was blatantly inappropriate and inauspicious, bearing no inherent or structurally aesthetic relationship to the dance. The dance context demands, therefore, that we do not compartmentalise or conceptualise the experience of beauty to one aspect of our senses. Each sound or jewel or emotion or substance inheres a beauty of its own which is conducive to a total aesthetic effect.

Beauty, above all, is a total sensation.

[Hindu Worship] is sensuous in that it makes full use of the senses—seeing, touching, smelling, tasting, and hearing...For all its famous otherworldliness, India is a culture that has also celebrated the life of this world and the realms of the senses (Eck 1981: 11-12).

The beauty that dancers seek to convey is the feeling between a person and the beautiful thing, and the way in which such beauty moves a person. It is her task to understand the ways in which something is beautiful and create an emotional reaction to it and about it, that in doing so, encompasses and contextualises beauty.

This relates very clearly back to rasa theory, where beauty reaches its end in the experience of aesthetic emotion. The content of this emotion gives beauty meaning. As part of this, however, is the emphasis that dance imagery, drawing on the general character of Hinduism, places on oppositions. Alongside images of beauty, the dancer portrays those of ugliness and destruction. The terrifying aspect of devi or of Lord Siva, the menace of demons, or violent

images of death. '[W]hat is aesthetically pleasing and what is beautiful are not necessarily the same thing' (Coote 1992: 266), although they combine to *amount* to the same thing. Aesthetic emotion, therefore, emerges in the unity of all emotional aspects, and in doing so, becomes a more abstract beauty. '[T]he artist is challenged to reveal the beauty of all experiences...in so far as we see and feel beauty, we see and are at one with Him [god]' (Coomaraswamy 1918: 30). The ultimate beauty of *sringara rasa* exists not in the western vision of 'the True and the Good' (Gell 1992: 41), but in an essential experience that exists as an ideal, independent of judgement because it is in fact above all judgement.

Beautiful People

the nature of beautiful people

Out of daily aesthetic practice emerges another category—the creation of a personal aesthetic. In turn, out of a daily personal aesthetic, we can see the aesthetics of dance in a dancer's role as student and performer. Let us start with Madam. Madam was chosen by her guru over and above her sisters as the only suitable student in his eyes for learning dance. His decision was based on her whole demeanour, including her physical appearance, which made her suitable for dancing, and from his own competence as guru to decide such things. According to the *Natyasastra*, appropriate physical attributes are important in dance, both in terms of presenting a beautiful image, and as an indication of character. Perhaps it is more suitable to do away with the concept of indication altogether in order to appreciate that the one simply *is* the other.¹⁰ Consider the 'Characteristics of a Dancing Girl (*patra*)' outlined in Nandikesvara's *Abhinaya Darpana*:

She should be slender-bodied, beautiful, young, with full round breasts, self-confident, witty, pleasing, knowing well where to begin [a dance] and where to stop, having large eyes, able to perform in accompaniment of vocal and instrumental music, and to observe the proper time-beats (*tala*), having splendid dresses and possessing a happy countenance. A girl having all these qualifications is called a dancer (*patra*) (Ghosh 1957: 43).

The interchangeability of physical characteristics and dress with personality requirements indicates their interdependence. Other texts place further emphasis on delineating desirable physical attributes in exact and poetic ways. Citing Vasantarajiyā's *Nrtya-sastra*:

¹⁰ O'Flaherty addresses this in connection with the use of metaphor in Indian literature and philosophy: 'To understand what a thing is *like* is to understand what it *is*' (1984: 260).

Face of the beauty of the autumn moon, elongated eyes, two arms sloping at the shoulders, a bosom with high breasts close-pressed, no space between them, flanks as though polished, waist of a hand's span, magnificent buttocks, and feet with curving toes; according to the type adhering in the dancing master's mind, so ought her form to be (Coomaraswamy 1936: 34 fn. 5).

Here, close attention is paid to creating a visual aesthetic, rich in imagery, sexual suggestion and detail, and which emphasises the guru's authority to make these judgements.

Finally, returning to Nandikesvara, we are told 'Her Disqualifications':

The ten kinds of women that should be avoided in the natya are: women with white specks in their eyeballs, or women who have scanty hair, or have thick lips or pendant breasts, or who are either very fat or very thin, or are either very tall or very short, or hunch-backed, or have no voice (Ghosh 1957: 43).

From this we glean several more insights. We see the interconnectedness of the arts described previously, where a dancer should have good singing ability in order to complete her overall aesthetic quality. We also see an emphasis away from extremes. Beauty is in balance. Ideas of unity are now expressed in terms of balance, pushed further in the combined aspects of the dance. The balance between the energetic rhythms of the feet and the flowing movements of arms and gesture relates to the male and female aspect, and is encapsulated in the graceful form of the Nataraja. The image evoked is also comparable to descriptions of the bhakti poetess, Karaikkal Ammaiyar, who requested that Lord Siva make her 'ugly like a ghost, so that people would avoid her' (Gupta 1991: 197). Gupta goes on to say: 'In iconography, she is depicted as an emaciated figure with dangling breasts like a demoness and often with long dishevelled hair' (op. cit.). The ideal form is also similarly expressed in carvings and sculptures of women and goddesses in temples. Undoubtedly, physical depictions are built around mythical iconography where ideals (both in appearance and behaviour) relate to devi in her various forms, and in opposition to the general ugliness of the demonesses.

Against this backdrop, the decision made by Madam's guru begins to make sense. An ideal physical and emotional aesthetic represents beauty at a number of levels, and if we connect beauty and auspiciousness (cf. Montani 1999: 224), the devadasi's role as an 'ever-auspicious woman' (Marglin 1985) is inherent in her physical form. We enter a dialogue which connects the self with the body and aesthetics. 'If we are to look for a relevant theory of the body...then possibly it lies in the relationship between physical appearance and internal qualities' (Strathern 1979: 249).

If we examine more closely the role of the devadasis, however, our perceptions of dance as art are further challenged. Kersenboom draws our attention to the overriding performative and functional aspect of the devadasi's ritual tradition, where beauty in the aesthetic form comes second to manipulation of the divine for human purposes. She says:

[I]n all the samples of ritual devotional repertoire once performed by the *devadasis* in Tamilnadu, it is clear that their art was marked by a minimal attempt to achieve aesthetic effect. The songs and dances were extremely straightforward and simple. It is clear that they were considered a ritual task, one which had to be performed for the sake of its occurrence and not for the sake of its artistic form (1991: 146).

Emerging from courtly tradition, and witnessed as an art-form, bharatanatyam contains more ornate aestheticism than its ritual counterpart. Rather than assuming that this minimises the connection between the content and purpose of 'ritual' as instrumental on the one hand and 'art' (including aesthetic effect) on the other, I suggest that we should look for shared features, thereby enhancing our understanding of both. In the citation above, Kersenboom concedes that the devadasis practise an 'art', but then precludes its existence as an 'artistic form'. In confirmation of her findings, she characterises this in the attitude of the devadasis to their work, concluding that '[t]he *devadasis* of Tiruttani performed these songs and dances without self-conscious pride. Their attitude towards the repertoire remains respectful but matter of fact' (ibid.: 147).

Such an attitude is strikingly similar to those I often found among dancers of bharatanatyam. The circumstances under which dancers in Britain, for example, have to teach, rehearse and perform are invariably unpredictable, and often far from ideal. Practice spaces are often temporary or run-down. Performances may be in lovely auditoriums or churches, or they may equally be five minutes at a community multi-cultural event or in an Indian restaurant. Dancers are necessarily pragmatic about dancing, and often retain a healthy sense of humour. They equally hold dance in the highest respect and esteem. The problem lies in narrowly defined expectations of the categories 'art', 'aesthetic' and 'ritual'. Perhaps Tambiah provides us with a useful perspective:

I do not consider ritual as a radically different type of practice from that of everyday life. All human practices have an element of conventionality. One should rather speak of a continuum from least formal to most formal practice, the former corresponding to everyday life, the latter to those times and places which all cultures set apart and designate as special by various

markers of time and place, as well as by linguistic markers (1979: 116 cited in Marglin 1985: 15).

Whereas ritual may be conceptualised as an ideal type, we must be aware of identifying particular responses as being appropriate to one or the other, where no such division exists. Similarly, in his discussion of art, Coote urges us to find 'art' in everyday human activity, preferring to talk of 'the aesthetic aspect of a society's activities and products' (1992: 246). Work concerning the body, performance and dress, for example, becomes valuable to our discussion in terms of meaningfully integrating, rather than separating, 'art' and 'aesthetic' (Gell 1992). Such work can emphasise everyday or ritual aspects of the aesthetic that are not necessarily or conventionally labelled as 'art' by anthropologists, art historians and the like (see Strathern 1979; Kapferer 1991; Coote 1992).

Bharatanatyam, however, is often perceived not only as an 'art' but also as a 'religious' or 'spiritual' practice. All three can imply an attitude of reverence or preciousness towards the dance as it is taken out of its original context. As I have indicated, these attitudes are often only half the story, and many dancers resist religious or spiritual labels, particularly in attempts to recognise bharatanatyam as a dance form equivalent to its western dance counterparts. Nevertheless, in other circumstances, such perceptions become appropriate—say in the language used during dance classes or in a dancer's personal relationship with the dance. These multiple aspects begin to make sense both culturally and historically. In the same way that we see the execution and object of daily, religious and formal aesthetics combine, so too do the dancer's ritual and aesthetic histories.

I cannot follow the rules and regulations of conduct that are laid down for the *devadasi*, I can perform and offer my art form at the feet of the Lord only for the sake of culture (Panigrahi cited in Varley 1998: 268).¹¹

The *process* by which these categories may combine is eloquently described by Parkin.¹² Although with reference to a different cultural context, Parkin makes some relevant observations about performative aesthetics where 'emotions...make for aesthetic as well as functional appropriateness' (1985: 142). Like the devadasis, diviners are both artists and ritual specialists.

¹¹ Sanjukta Panigrahi is an odissi dancer, trained in both odissi and bharatanatyam who travelled widely outside India to teach and perform. The article cited here is written by Varley as a tribute following the dancer's death in 1997. The article has three voices: direct quotations from Panigrahi herself, passages describing Panigrahi's views, and Varley's own voice. I hope to make clear which of these it is when I cite the piece throughout the thesis.

¹² Parkin considers these issues in relation to Giriama diviners, Kenya.

Divination has a powerful performative aspect. Its apparent empirical success depends on the persuasive artistry of the diviner. Giriami diviners bring their own bodies into the performance...They bring together their own bodily parts, but also their judgement and feelings into an aesthetic whole (ibid.: 146-7).

In this light, and contrary to Kersenboom's earlier assumption, is not the artist of Coomaraswamy, who combines art and beauty in an aesthetic whole, the same as the ritual artist (the devadasi) on some level, where formal Indian philosophy is integrated in an 'acting-out' of the aesthetic?

modern art

How relevant are theoretical and historical references to a modern experience of bharatanatyam? Is it simply academic indulgence to return to textual evidence of aesthetic aspirations, or to the ritual tasks of the devadasis, when in fact they have no practical bearing on the situation as we see it today? Since the emergence of dance in its modern form, there are no obvious aesthetic criteria that a dancer must meet comparable to Madam's selection in order to be considered as a student. Students come in all shapes and sizes, and no teacher openly discriminates on aesthetic grounds. Teachers do not necessarily choose their students (at least initially), illustrated, for example, in the advent of bharatanatyam as taught in the adult evening classes in the UK, and as Meduri describes young dancers in India: 'The students with economic power shop around for the best teachers and test them out. It used to be the other way round' (1988: 13). Student access is based purely on willingness to attend, and on the ability to pay. I argue, however, that aspects of this same aesthetic ideal still exist in subtle ways, often related to language used in dance classes or in latent opinions expressed by teachers and students, or even in humorous remarks.¹³

My friend and I are quickly changing in a cold church vestry ready for a short performance of a bharatanatyam piece choreographed to bagpipes. As always, we are using our dance teacher's old costumes. Our busts are considerably smaller than hers are, and it is a source of great amusement to her to see how little we fill her blouses. Later, when we look at photographs, she says jokingly, but in a clearly uncomplimentary way, that this makes me look 'like one of those people in India we call...umm, how do we call them...would you say refugees?!' The subject comes up again and again, with possible solutions such as stuffing

¹³ This discussion will re-emerge in my analysis of an emotional ideal later in the thesis, but I make connections here, as it obviously forms part of the discourse on aesthetics also. The reader will see connections as and when appropriate. Here I focus more closely on 'physical' properties of the aesthetic as indicative of multiple layers of beauty.

blouses or buying wonderbras. Somewhere under all the jokes is the undeniable fact that we fall short. It may not be a far-reaching criticism, but it exists in the background, as do opinions about the size of a student's hips, the shape of her bottom or her feet, or how large her eyes are. Often these attitudes arise from the voice of a former guru—a received opinion, which issues from a 'sense' of how things should be—rather than from a literary source or a fixed articulate notion.

Looking to other relevant attributes as examples, we see how hairstyles form an important part of a personal aesthetic. With very few exceptions, all dancers have long hair. Generally, without prompting, students grow their hair as they become more serious about dancing. I only came across one serious dance student, an older student, who had short hair. In the pictures she showed me of her arangetram, however, it is noticeably styled in such a way as to be almost unnoticeable—or rather, to look long. She is defensive, and gives her reasons for cutting it. Further, it is favourable to look after hair in an 'Indian' way—oiling it with sesame oil, and always tying it back neatly whilst dancing.

Being in Chidambaram sharpened my sense that hair and hairstyles embody important symbols in everyday situations, acting as indications, not least to myself, of my 'Indian-ness', and by implication, the extent of my connection with the dance. I felt uncomfortable, for example, wearing my hair loose, or in a 'western' style, even though it was perfectly acceptable for me to do so. Given half a chance, a friend there would eagerly get her hands on my hair in order to comb it through and style it 'correctly' in a neat bun or plait. Personal aesthetics is about much more than a visual awareness. It concerns feelings and expectations, many of which are created within the dance context. At the historical root, perhaps, is the devadasi who, I was told in reference to Madam, had a reputation of being very neat in appearance, 'with her hair nicely smoothed back, sari ironed.' Her sari would also be tied in such a way as to reveal her status as a devadasi.¹⁴

Permeating expectations about a personal aesthetic is an acknowledgement that beauty is not a fixed quality. In contemporary experiences of *bharatanatyam*, this quality is more openly emphasised than the more prescriptive qualities evident in texts, and in Madam's experience of selection as a devadasi. A dancer is subject to transformation on a number of levels, and according to a number of factors. Through dancing over a sustained period, her body shape may begin to alter, where physiological changes are cited as a reflection of the deeper ability

¹⁴ Saris are always a good visual indication of many things (cf. Tarlo 1996). The cloth, the way they are tied, the length; all reveal aspects of status, caste, occupation, age etc. As a foreigner in India, one is always open to judgement according to how (well) a sari is tied.

of the dance to transform. Even if no obvious change takes place, the forms of the dance emphasise the desired physical aesthetic, *effecting* a transformation in the dancer, if not *realising* it. She carries herself in the belief that the correct outer form elicits the appropriate inner sense—‘it is her dance and music alone that make a dancer beautiful’ (Balasaraswati 1980: 105).

forms of beautiful experience

The aesthetic is crucial to the way individuals articulate themselves, which, as Kapferer observes in his analysis of exorcism and healing rites in Sri Lanka, ‘gives rise to certain possibilities of meaning in and about experience’ (1991: 246). He continues:

The form of exorcism aesthetic has inherent possibilities for experience and meaning. By form here I do not refer to the outer shape of the aesthetic, but to its inner structure, the organizing principles which affect the degree to which it unites with its subject (ibid.: 249).

The dancer is thus being taught to absorb an outer aesthetic on a level of inner experience. The ‘dance context’ widens to include the general way that a dancer articulates her body. Whereas Marglin (1990) interprets dance gestures as refined and historically evolved South Asian gestures, dancers unfamiliar with such gestures absorb them in the opposite direction as part of a personal history. A particular style of running (with restricted movement in the upper body), or of using the eyes and eyebrows to convey moods, or of using the hands, filters into a dancer’s everyday movements in a diluted form. On the one hand this is a process of embodying knowledge, which I discuss in the following chapter, but it is also one of creating a body aesthetic. It becomes aesthetically pleasing to use those forms, which also carry a sense of being emotionally pleasing—of being beautiful. This strikes me in comparison with descriptions of Dinka ‘posturing’ as a much more obvious rendering of the same principle. Coote (1992) cites Lienhardt:

‘a characteristic sight in Western Dinkaland is that of a young man with his arms curved above his head, posturing either at a dance or for his own enjoyment when he is alone with his little herd’ (1961: 16)

and continues with his own observation:

Agar Dinka women raise their arms above their heads in imitation of the horns of cows. This curving of the arms in imitation of cattle is, for the Dinka, one of the forms of ‘handsomeness’ (*dheng* [or *dheeng*]) (Coote 1992: 259).

Body aesthetics becomes an important marker of identity, both to the self, and in communication with others, who will tangentially recognise dancing characteristics in a dancer's conversation.

In performance, make-up, costume and jewellery are important aesthetic attributes which further create and emphasise a dancer's beauty. They are not simply appendages to the dance, but an important part of the dance itself and of the dancer's bodily aesthetic, stemming from the time when devadasis were not only dancers, but ritual specialists also (Kersenboom 1991 & 1995), encompassing a role which extended beyond simply 'dancing'. Rules governing costume are handed down from teacher to student and are taken as given. Particular pieces of gold jewellery, the correct line of black eyeliner, the headpiece, bangles on each wrist. The colour of a student's costume, especially her first costume, is often chosen by her teacher. Colours indicate a dancer's status, and I remember the quiet discomfort when a student's mother inappropriately chose a costume very similar in colour to that of our teacher.

With an understanding of expectations, each individual dancer then exercises her own right to choose, and may deviate from the expected elaborate attire or create new details, revealing a glimpse of personal preference.

The costume proclaims a dancer's identity—the school of dance she belongs to and also her individuality and aesthetics. Through colours that complement her complexion, a style that flatters her figure and ornaments that enhance her features, the dancer makes her aesthetic and personal statement...Balance and restraint, a fine colour sense and a critical eye go into the costuming of a graceful dancer. Comfort, elegance and beauty are the ingredients of a well-made costume (Santhanam, *The Hindu* [folio], December 27th 1998).

Witnessing performances, it becomes clear that radical changes in costume echo the choreography of the dance piece, whereas smaller changes, such as the way red dye is applied to the feet, fall within certain expected criteria. Modern and new choreographies are noticeably more likely to show innovations in costume than more traditional pieces, the latter inherently demanding that the dancer be appropriately attired. Inevitably, the dancer places such demands on herself also. The following passage from the article cited above gives us a further insight into these strategies, which balance tradition and personal innovation:

The novice or young dancer is eager to establish the classical genre she belongs to. In her costume and in her performance, she conforms totally to tradition. As she grows older, just as her style gets its own individual stamp

so does her attire. Within the bounds of tradition she experiments and innovates, choosing the type of ornaments and design that best suit her personality and the numbers she executes. The evolution in attire is important for her growth as artiste (op. cit.).

The costume is in a way 'the aesthetic object [that] creates experience in the direct experience of it' (Kapferer 1991: 263). Preparing for performance is a ritual of carefully drawn lines to capture a perfect arch of an eyebrow, of hooking pleats to trouser legs, braiding a hairpiece into a tasselled point, of skilfully placed bobby pins¹⁵ and safety pins, of modest judgement and anticipation. Hurriedly and with care she bends to tie her bells, taking them to her eyes before buckling them round her ankles.

There you see the dancer. Look! Your eye is drawn to her. Crossing the stage her feet are neat and accurate. Soles stained red, they strike a circle on the stage, petals from her cupped hands falling in their wake. The lights fall on the silk of her costume in angles of colour and gold, and catch elusive stars in the jewels adorning her body—throat, waist, wrists, nose, hairline, ears. Her eyes, sleek as almonds, outlined black, are not her eyes, but hold you with a gaze that is bright and full. Now, her head bowed in humble gesture, you see white jasmine twisted in her hair.

Beautiful things transform the dancer entirely, and she assumes a divine quality at times. Consider, for example, the descriptive terms written by a devotee of Siva about his divine aspects: 'with body shared by the resplendent bejewelled One, or the vocal honey which emanates from the blossomy mouth...' (Turaimankalam Civappirakaca Atikal cited in Yocum 1983: 33). The dancer is unmistakably adorned in very much the same way as a *murti*. 'When dancing to the beats of the rhythm...the dancer's body is rid of its human weaknesses and is purified into a conduit of the spiritual and the beautiful' (Balasaraswati 1980: 102). The transformation is comparable to that described by Allen, concerning the festival of Durga in Kathmandu, where a young girl becomes an incarnation of the goddess (Kumari):

[T]he girl is dressed and made up with Kumari hairstyle, red *tika*, third eye, jewellery, etc., and then sits on her beautifully carved wooden throne on the seat of which the priest has painted the powerful *sri yantra mandala* of Taleju. She also holds the sword of Taleju and it is at this point that the final and complete transformation takes place. It is worth noting that though from now until her disqualification some years later she will be continuously regarded as Kumari, it is also believed that it is only when fully made up and sitting on her throne that identification is complete. At other times, especially when casually playing with friends, she is partly herself and partly Kumari (1976: 306-7 cited in Gell 1998: 151).

¹⁵ Kirby grips (hair grips).

Beauty and ritual form a powerful alliance in effective and auspicious transformation. In the case of dance, this is echoed in a dancer's sense of self. Dressed as she is, she is in many ways hard to distinguish from other dancers. Sitting at her kitchen table, Manisha¹⁶ shows me photographs of a dancer that were taken when she was in India. They are professionally done, with the dancer in full costume captured in various expressions and characters. Halfway through the album I suddenly click that this is her, Manisha. I feel stupid. Of course it was obvious given the situation, but somehow the image looked so unlike her. When I express my surprise she smiles. She knows what I mean, although she herself *does* relate to the pictures as her own. Other dancers, however, can feel distant from some dance images of themselves. Even colour and racial identities are, in part, hidden under the display, or at the very least become irrelevant. The dancer becomes the dance, becomes a work of art.

To make a further comparison, I cite a description of, Sanjukta Panigrahi:

The word commonly used to try and explain the experience of a meeting with her is 'beauty'. Sanjukta is incredibly beautiful: on stage, in life, during rehearsals, discussing with her musicians correcting the rhythm, smiling with her cheeky expression, thanking the public, kneeling before the God Jagannath, drinking her morning tea, entering the stage dressed in white or shocking pink or orange or turquoise, teaching, making jokes, when she says at a symposium that she doesn't like to speak in public, when she dances—Sanjukta is always the image of beauty itself (Varley 1998: 250).

This is the 'part identification'—the Kumari girl casually playing with her friends. Once spectators, or devoted students, are captured by a sense of beauty in a dancer, they see it in her whole way of being. Strangers may see it if they are so inclined. The situations described above are partly to do with personality, but also to do with a dancer's way of conducting herself in the disciplined body acquired in the dance process (which is not unrelated to her personality), especially in very public contexts. I have never seen this particular dancer, but I can see the described sense of beauty because I have seen these same actions in other dancers, and I know to conceive them as beautiful. In this way we can begin to identify the differing *levels* in the nature of transformation, not all of which are manifest at any one time.

¹⁶ Manisha is a dancer friend of mine in her early twenties living in Surrey. She trained in bharatanatyam initially at Bhavan, and then received a scholarship to go and train with the Dhananjayans, a notable teaching and dancing couple from Kerala, who have their own school in Chennai. On return, she decided to give up her projected career in law, and work with dance full-time. This involves a number of activities both in Surrey and London—teaching, performing and giving lecture-demonstrations.

Concluding his discussion of the Kumari, Gell says:

From the point of view of the anthropology of art...there is an insensible transition between 'works of art' in artefact form and human beings: in terms of the positions they may occupy in the networks of human social agency, they may be regarded as almost entirely equivalent (Gell 1998: 153).

My first reaction is to agree with this. There is a sense in which dancers as human beings enter a chain of aesthetic expectation which relates to all the arts, including poetry, music, architecture and drama alongside artefacts. They are used and appreciated in a way that is socially sanctioned and culturally expressed, both of which may be learnt, and eventually internalised. Developing an appropriate aesthetic sense is a process of embodiment, in which emotional responses are generated and recognised. Layers of aesthetic understanding are built within individuals as part of a group, and are imbued through the absorption of aesthetic principles, and the creation of an appropriate aesthetic sense. Because it *is* a process, it is also subject to time and experience; a matter of practise, if you like. This idea represents an important theme in the basis of my analysis throughout the following chapters. It is only over time that aesthetic experience surfaces with the required balance of awareness and spontaneity. For this reason among others, dancers, particularly from different cultural contexts, come under huge pressure to commit themselves to studying dance on a long-term basis. Dedication to her art is much admired quality in a dancer.

Because art is fused with emotion in the form of *rasa*, however, my second reaction to Gell's argument begs to differ, where the 'human' factor in art becomes instrumental in eliciting an appropriate response. It is unclear from the context whether 'works of art' in artefact form encompasses idols. In the *bharatanatyam* context, I suggest that there is a useful distinction to be made. Both dancers and idols are unique in their invocation of the human form because spectators and partakers, whether worshippers or audiences, can relate to them as emotional beings. The beauty in aesthetic display and performance must be sought as the beauty in oneself, which is ultimately god. It is a *felt* experience, but a very concrete one because it is born out of everyday emotions, including those emotions relating to daily aesthetic life. Images of deities are further enlivened by the dance, as dancers become deities. The myths surrounding them paint them as divinely beautiful, but at the same time subject to the emotions of human existence. As potent symbols of emotion they experience love, anger, jealousy, hurt and playful laughter. Individual emotions, which may be directly comprehended by audiences and worshippers alike, convert in their totality to aesthetic

emotion. It is therefore important that art in dance takes this human form, which differs from that of inanimate objects in terms of the way it encourages people to engage felt responses.

Idols do not stand alone. They encompass a mythological personality which both enlivens their presence and makes them live in the present. It also gives them agency. As a vessel of their presence, the dancer acts out their mythological stories and characters. Consider O'Flaherty:

Gods and demons serve as metaphors for human situations...Myth is a two-way mirror in which ritual and philosophy may regard one another. It is the moment when people normally caught up in everyday banalities are suddenly (perhaps because of some personal upheaval) confronted with problems that they have hitherto left to the bickerings of the philosophers; and it is the moment when philosophers, too, come to terms with the darker, flesh-and-blood aspects of their abstract inquiries (1976: 8-9 cited in Zarrilli 2000: 4).

Here we see two themes emerging. One, we see how theoretical texts which philosophise about dance can find their end, and thereby become meaningful, in mythical sequences enacted by the dancer and witnessed by the audience. In the same way, in my discussion of the aesthetic, I have drawn both on philosophy and experience in order to reach these particular meanings and give them value in particular contexts. Two, we can begin to understand how, if we think of 'myths' as the idols which embody them, and as the dance sequences which enact them, human forms can take an important and unique role in terms of their emotional application. Their social agency (see next section) as objects of art, and as divinity is mobilised precisely because of their particular form. They encourage an emotional identification from their viewers where personal experience acts as the foundation for an appropriate universal aesthetic.

Om Nama Shivaya. The temple chant begins to filter into my window of consciousness from loudspeakers in the street below. I am too hot. Lying on my stomach, I reflect on what I have been reading. *Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists*¹⁷ is temporarily discarded. In it, is the way that dancing connects with the constant grief of being parted from my husband for such a long period. It is the mythic or divine counterpart (Trawick 1990: 252) demonstrating 'the fluid relationship between ideal and experience' (Trawick 1990: 23). I am Sita. This is how Sita felt when Rama was taken from her. This is the sense of love the nayika—the multi-faceted heroine—is seen to dance when she is separated from her beloved.

¹⁷ Coomaraswamy and Sister Nivedita 1967.

I suggest these are the kind of experiences through which people imbue their deities with sense, whether as dancers or devotees; through which they make art aesthetic. We can compare the process with that described by Abu-Lughod with reference to Bedouin oral poetry (*ghinnawas*):

[I]t seems likely that the poetic conventions would lead them [Awlad Ali individuals] to experience recurrent situations in similar ways. For example, love stories might set a tone and provide a model for interpreting or framing events in people's romantic lives. Many of the poems individuals recite apropos of their own difficulties in love come from particular love stories. By drawing poems from these grand tales of passion to express their own sentiments, individuals, in defining their situation in a particular way both for themselves and for others, might be moulding their lives to the culturally shared imagery of old stories. By alluding to the stories through the use of *ghinnawas*, people might be framing their wishes and situations as part of a familiar tragic and universal type. Does this affect how they experience them? (1985: 258).

In answer to her question, and in agreement with what she later intimates, I suggest that it does indeed effect how people experience them. Not simply in a way which allows us to reflect on experience, but also in a way that imbues art, whether dance or poetry, with experience. It is this relationship which brings a meaningful and creative dynamic to forms which otherwise appear constraining or prescriptive.

Using these kinds of analogies we can frame Weiner's (1991) citation of Armstrong:

The creator does not build into his work cues to some real or imagined state external to the work itself, but rather strives to achieve in that work the embodiment of those physical conditions which generate or are causative or constitutive of that emotion, feeling or value with which he is concerned (1971: 30).

Followed by his own comment:

Because the work of art grows out of and alongside all the actions of our life, the embodiment that the artist strives for is essentially a spatiotemporal one. Art does indeed 'grow out of its society as an expression of the deepest qualities and motives in it' (Yasuda 1957: 37), providing we realise that these values are not presented in abstract form but are those experienced in the daily confrontation with life itself (Weiner 1991: 7).

moving parts

In the final part of this chapter, I return to consider further theoretical frameworks in which my work may be placed in the light of the ideas and observations presented thus far. After Goodman (1978), Hughes-Freeland advocates asking not 'What is Art?' but 'When is Art?' (1997a: 474). With my work I consider two further dimensions and ask 'Where and How is Art?' In doing so, I begin to address the issue of 'how people become *who* they are' (Toren 1996: 285). Accordingly, we see aesthetics as 'the theory of study of form incarnating feeling' (Armstrong 1975: 11 cited in Feld 1982: 233) in a way which directs our analysis to 'the being of the affecting presence'¹⁸ and the 'feelingful' dimensions of its experience' (Feld 1982: 233).

These experiences are always placed. With widespread teaching and performing, bharatanatyam is an increasingly mobile form. Its survival of such historical, geographical and cultural fluidity is very much dependent on its conception and presentation as art. Treating it as art in this context, and as such, irreducible, demands that we examine how this pushes us towards new meanings that conform to a definition of art which embraces Indian theories of the aesthetic together with cultural and mythological imagery, but in a context where they do not necessarily exist. The dancer relies on a created sense of art, which is attached specifically to her dance experience. '*Rasa*' becomes its own category. It is both ideal:

[t]he reality or possible occurrence of such experience [*rasa*] is commonly admitted, though it may be difficult to *define* it. Further, it is also fairly easy to mark it off from other major forms of human experience (Saxena 1989: 3, original italics),

and attractive, an opportunity for us to 'contemplate an object of art and beauty in peace, and to let it delight our thought and imagination' (op. cit.). I suggest that the term 'art' is used in conjunction with *rasa* to powerfully transform the associations that dancers, students and audiences have about aesthetic sensibility, constituting an experiential act of becoming.

Further, and at another level of analysis, dance is also an 'act of becoming' by dint of its very form. Discussing Indian art, Bahadur observes: 'Sculpture, architecture and painting

¹⁸ The term Armstrong uses to replace 'art.'

deal with space, while music and poetry deal with time' (1965: 9). But what of dance? Dance deals with both space and time, lending it a quality less easy to identify and write about. At the outset of her article, Hughes-Freeland qualifies this absence in relation to western artistic biases:

Western traditions of art history and appreciation have focussed on the plastic form as a symbolic representation which stands in a relation of imitation to the real world. Such traditions determine contemporary cross-cultural approaches to art. The concentration is on objects, whether or not these objects were created for aesthetic contemplation in themselves, and neglects embodied cultural practices such as dance (1997a: 473).

Coote echoes this in saying '[a] Western preoccupation with the visual has led...to an undervaluation of the poetic, choreological, and other arts' (Coote 1992: 246).

Whilst we can appreciate that dance, too, is 'visual', it also combines art and the aesthetic in ways which are both visual and aural, and although movements are both repeated and replicated, they additionally always possess a transitory quality. Closely related to sculptural forms and temple reliefs, *bharatanatyam* nevertheless emphasises a strong connection between the plastic and the moving form. Alongside music and rhythm as artistic forms also, *bharatanatyam* allows us to experience it in all these composite terms. In its storytelling and descriptive aspect, it further connects everyday unconscious and informal aesthetics with formal movements and expression of dance vocabulary. Seemingly, *bharatanatyam* occupies a unique category, yet draws on general discussions of art and aesthetics—nowhere more so than in Indian thought which emphasises the singular object and effect of all artistic forms.

art and agency

Directing our attention to the where and how of dance, then, is a necessary integration of several theoretical and practical contexts. To uncover the way in which these relationships may interact, I turn to Gell's analysis of 'art and agency' in a book of the same name. In doing so, I hope to add further coherence to the place dance takes in creating and responding to social, cultural and individual meanings. Throughout my discussion, *bharatanatyam* has emerged as an expression of social (and politicised) relationships at a macro and micro level, whilst beliefs in its capacity as a universal aesthetic form pervade personal attitudes and understandings. The latter beliefs are necessarily social and politicised also, but importantly, they are not necessarily or easily perceived as such.

In identifying those social relationships, Gell (1998) promotes a schema of 'index – agent – recipient'. A situation emerges in which the meanings attached to art forms cannot be separated from the context of social relationships of which they are a part.¹⁹ Gell argues that the term 'art object' be replaced with 'index', as a more representative and anthropologically appropriate term (ibid.: 12). In doing so he invites parallels with Peirce's work on semeiosis, and invokes a semiotic analysis, but necessarily distinguishing it from semiotics in a purely linguistic sense (ibid.: 14). Indexes are mobilised by the chain of agency, and particularly of social agency, which they represent. In this way they are subject to the abduction of meaning: '*the index is in itself seen as the outcome, and/ or the instrument of, social agency*' (ibid.: 15, original emphasis). Agency may be dispersed at a number of levels. 'Artists', for example, may act as agents to produce indexes. Indexes themselves then may become agents as part of a wider environment, where witnesses act as recipients. In the case of visual representations, the image of the object or person which the index is meant to portray, is named the prototype.²⁰

In the bharatanatyam context we can identify a chain of agency according to Gell's schema.²¹ In their teaching capacity, gurus act as agents. Instructing students involves them in the creation of an artwork, a dancer and dance form, where the student is also a recipient. As performer, the student is an index, both as an example of the art form, but also in the display, which indicates to their audience (recipients) the individual aesthetic style of their teacher. It is predominantly a visual process. To achieve it, the guru acts as an index to the student of their particular form or style of dance. The student, however, exerts an increasing measure of agency to their own dance also, in nuances of expression, quality of feeling or execution of movements.

Applying this scheme to these processes reveals the simultaneously fluid and fixed quality which bharatanatyam presents. Aesthetic form is incorporated according to a specific code, but additional meanings and interpretations emerge according to individuals and to context. For dancers they concern a felt response to their art which embraces social and political meanings alongside a firmly generated belief in the independent and disinterested beauty of

¹⁹ In this part of his analysis, Gell emphasises cognition as a route to meaning, and focuses predominantly on the plastic arts. Further, his analysis is schematically based which promotes the tendency towards meaning in this cognitive sense. Clearly, this is in many ways a very different approach to my own, which is predominantly phenomenological and intuitive in nature. I nevertheless turn to it as an insightful, enjoyable and useful offering.

²⁰ This is clearly a very brief summary of a lengthy and complex theory. For the original explication see Gell 1998 pp 12-94.

²¹ The use of the word 'index' here is as part of the scheme described in the previous paragraph. Although similarly inherited from Peircean categories, it should not be confused with the scheme of icon – index – symbol used in chapter five according to Daniel (1984, 1996).

the form. Further, they clearly occupy different positions at different times. A young dancer performing her arangetram is more of an index of her teacher than the mature dancer who exerts her agency over her style through time, experience and confidence. Both are indexes of their form. The guru or teacher may only be an index of the dance in a teaching capacity, where this part is heavily combined with their capacity as agent, or they may be performers themselves, mirroring the processes alive in their students.²² In this chain of agency we see time as unbounded in and by the visual form, which importantly mirrors the ongoing journey towards of aesthetic beauty. People as agents are very clearly implicated in this process as affirmation of their own status within the aesthetic experience. The significance of this is aptly invoked by Gow in his discussion of Piro designs, painted by women both as decoration on various types of vessels, and on the skin of young women and girls in puberty rites:

Piro design is beautiful because it is difficult to do, and it is difficult to do because it takes a lifetime to master. It renders the social productivity of a woman's life as the visual experience of beauty on another person (1999: 230).²³

what matters

Remaining with Gell, I pursue a related notion in his work that explains the nature of art in terms of the way in which persons become invested in objects. Art objects allow people to exist as 'distributed persons'. Consider the description of the kula operator as 'more than a merely incarnate man. He is an expanded and disseminated being, present here, there, and everywhere because his name is attached to circulating objects' (Gell 1998: 230). This throws further light on the process by which dance is created and reproduced as an art form. Gurus attach their names to students in very much the same way.²⁴ In doing so they reaffirm their symbolic status as 'more than incarnate man' and ensure that their presence is felt beyond the boundaries of space and time, and, indeed, skin. Students, however, differ from kula objects in the level of agency they may eventually assert over themselves, lending the form the fluid capacity for visual change, where the basis for control over such change is dispersed.

These arguments do, perhaps, lead us to perceive the 'art' in dance as politically and socially driven, but they should not permit us to emphasise this over and above the aesthetic value it

²² For further discussion of the role of the guru in relation to their place as performers also, see chapter three.

²³ Here, Gow compares various types of 'flow' that are experienced in Piro life and symbolically connect painting design with female procreative qualities. We can see the relevance of this association in my own work in chapter three, where I consider the relationship between guru and student in terms of kinship-type bonds.

²⁴ See chapter three also.

professes, or to see the aesthetic I speak of as meaningfully defined entirely in these terms. As we shall see later in the thesis, 'the dance' exists as an independent entity, taking an important space in the imaginations of all dancers, whether students or teachers, and in those of many audiences, also. Unlike Gell (1998: 19), I wish to emphasise this characteristic, independent of its place in social relations, as an important dynamic in the apprehension of meaning. Further, *bharatanatyam*'s mythic quality is closely associated with the divine and the spiritual. '[T]o write about art at all is, in fact, to write either about religion or the substitute for religion...In India aesthetics, as in the ancient world, is subsumed under the philosophy of religion, that is, moral philosophy, as a matter of course' (Gell 1998: 97).²⁵

It is Gell's belief that 'it does not matter, in ascribing "social agent" status, what a thing (or a person) "is" in itself; what matters is where it stands in a network of social relations' (1998: 123). Whilst later in my work I describe 'the dance' in terms of a human persona, this is not in order to wholly represent it as a social player. It cannot so easily be assigned a status in Gell's schema, which ceases to provide an adequate provision of meaning. 'The dance' is a confusion of artist, agent, and prototype—'the artist *is* what he is telling us about' (O'Flaherty 1984: 296)—and subject to change and interpretation which may also consign it to the category of recipient. In this instance, then, we need to push our analysis in a different direction.

Because we are concerned with the formation of *experience* through art, closer analysis of 'what matters' is required. Where an art-form is not articulated as such, to ascribe it value purely in social terms is to reduce it to them; it is in some ways to assume that 'what matters' is 'what happens' in terms of analysis. For the individuals concerned, *bharatanatyam* necessarily has much to do with what they understand as its theoretical and spiritual aesthetic. It is this that imbues it with a certain sense and authority, alongside the experience of learning and performing it in an environment of social and cultural relationships. So closely do these two aspects of the dance function, that they may at times be indistinguishable in the formation of experience.

That they *may be* distinguished, however, is a crucial part of their existence. Dancers always retain a sense of what *bharatanatyam* 'is' in itself. As a non-plastic art form this lends it a sustainable quality in the more precarious social environments of which it is part. It gives it

²⁵ Gell continues to enlarge on this point by emphasising a post-Enlightenment point of view which separated the beautiful and the holy, and thereby, religious and aesthetic experience, influencing a good deal of western thinking (1998: 97). Previous to this he points out the similarities in the social apprehension of art and image worship: 'I cannot tell the difference between religious and aesthetic exaltation' (op. cit.).

the solidity of the dancing figure carved in stone on a temple wall. The concept that dance as art exists as a category allows it to travel into different environments, beginning a process in each one which generates socially informed artistic meanings, and artistically informed individual experiences. Further, the idea (or ideal) of dance remains as a fixed constant for dancers who may find inconsistencies or discontinuities in the everyday processes connected with dancing and learning to dance. This characteristic, inherent in its displacement from temple ritual and redefinition, may well also embrace the ritual art of the devadasi as it evolved. Of bharatanatyam, Massey writes:

Blind orthodoxy endangers authenticity. The classics must, and always will, be a source of inspiration and instruction, but even these cannot come to life without being informed with the integrity of contemporary creative experience. Experiment and innovation are essential to the survival of a tradition (1990: 44).

Being re-cast and re-named as bharatanatyam and as an art-form therefore defined the nature of its survival and continues in the increasingly diverse settings of which it is now a part. Dancers who find that their social and artistic experience of the dance may at times be polarised, nevertheless retain a powerful resource in which dance is personally given value and meaning in aesthetic terms. Such terms are not, however, necessarily of individual value; aesthetic theory creates emotional forms, which, although individually felt, are publicly conceived. That they are self-consciously articulated as art also places them in a position to be publicly received and made personal. As described in the following two chapters, the parameters of such processes are defined by the systems that bharatanatyam inhabits, where access to aesthetic forms must be mediated and negotiated.

Chapter 2

Jatiswaram: Locating Meaning

Hamilax was a man of grudging words. One evening we were sitting on the bench, watching a huge and flaming sun set in the sky. I asked him what was the sun, and why it was leaving. "Ask your own heart, Hannibal," he said. "Many things become clear to those who learn to ask their own hearts in silence."

Ross Leckie, *Hannibal: A Novel*.

Saying something gives it life and death.

Ross Leckie, *Scipio: A Novel*.

Jatiswaram is a predominantly abstract item (nritta). Different sets of rhythmic patterns (korvais) are repeated and joined together to form the dance. Unlike alarippu, it contains 'the added joy of melody' (Balasaraswati 1980: 101). It is a highly technical piece, with each korvai more intricate than the last, and although central to a dancer's progression in studying the dance and invariably included in her arangetram, it is nowadays often omitted from other performances. In this chapter, I talk about knowledge. In the same way that the jatiswaram consolidates the dancer's technical ability, allowing her to move on to the more expressive pieces in her repertoire, this chapter is intended to provide the reader with a basis which, together with the previous chapter, underpins the rest of the thesis. I place dance within the frame of theories relating to knowledge, both in terms of general issues in understanding dance and bodily practice, and in more specific reference to bharatanatyam. I also consider ways in which knowledge is made meaningful and how we can use this to further the relevance of anthropological work.

Knowing others

I begin this section with a discussion of anthropology and fieldwork as a methodological baseline for collecting knowledge, seeing how this actually anticipates issues in the chapter as a whole.

It is appropriate that [Western man] should have used the Greek language to express the Hellenistic conception of the *Logos*, for it is to the fact of its Greek-Judaic inheritance that Western civilisation owes its essentially verbal character. We take this character for granted. It is the root and bark of our experience and we cannot readily transpose our imaginings outside it. We live inside the act of discourse. But we should not assume that a verbal matrix is the only one in which the articulations and conduct of the mind are conceivable. There are modes of intellectual and sensuous reality founded not on language, but on other communicative energies such as the icon or the musical note. And there are actions of the spirit rooted in silence. It is difficult to *speak* of these, for how should speech justly convey the shape and vitality of silence? (Steiner cited in Obeyesekere 1990: 276-7).

When I began dancing, I was not doing so as part of a fieldwork situation. In a dance class I was nowhere else but there, and it appeared a very bounded context of experience. As I became more immersed and serious about studying dance, it began to infringe on my lifestyle choices as a whole. I sensed a tension that was never fully articulated, only voiced during informal chats with my fellow dance students, and never referred to in the presence of my teacher. When I began my PhD, I freely told my teacher of my plans, trusting this would be welcomed as an example of a long-term commitment to the dance.

It did, in fact, seem to demonstrate the opposite, highlighting an important tension. My teacher perceived that my academic study was opposed to my dance education; by attempting to do both, I risked being successful in neither. Academic response to my work was equally sceptical, worried that being so immersed in my dance would not allow me the required 'distance' suitable to anthropological inquiry. Bent on my course, I gave up neither in favour of the other, although there were successive times when I seriously considered doing so.¹

As I left my first teacher and continued fieldwork in India and London, I found that her extreme view about the compatibility of the two disciplines was far from general. It should not be thought of as a universal perspective of those teaching bharatanatyam, as I shall illustrate. Rather, it is a powerful symbol of inherited attitudes that pass through teaching lineages, from guru to student. Experientially, it demonstrates how formative teachers are in the attitudes and emotions of their students, whilst at the same time providing me with an

¹ In a paper Wacquant gave (1996) concerning his work with prizefighters in the United States, he described the same dilemma. So much was he seduced by the whole activity of boxing, so much did it become part of him, that he reached a point of becoming faced with a personal dilemma of choosing to leave his academic career in favour of continuing his career as a boxer—the kind of dilemma which may face any anthropologist in the field. In this case, and in my own, it is interesting to identify why and how these choices emerge in terms of an immersion in a physical and aesthetic activity.

important insight into the emerging oppositions in my work, which deal explicitly with different types of knowledge.

On the one hand I address bodily and embodied knowledge, already a subject of considerable and useful anthropological attention (see e.g. Mauss 1950; Merleau-Ponty 1962; Douglas 1970; Bourdieu 1977; Blacking 1977; Csordas 1993, 1994; Lock 1993), and clearly important in the analysis of any dance form. Within and alongside this, we find an epistemological 'other', with bharatanatyam articulated as part of more general philosophical theories of art and aesthetics. Considering this, and following suggestions in chapter one, anthropological knowledge becomes situated outside the tradition in which the dance is placed—'the very notion of cultural relativism is an ontological conception of man and culture that does not exist, as far as I know, in philosophical traditions outside the West' (Obeyesekere 1990: xxii).

Finally, all of this is framed in anthropological knowledge as situated in academic discourse. This is, in many respects, the 'act of discourse' referred to in the opening citation. This knowledge is in the paradoxical position of appreciating the existence of other types of knowledge, whilst demanding that they defer to a single view of knowledge for their expression and analysis, and one which is predominantly expressed in the written word. The ensuing tension is not only in the nature of my fieldwork, but also in the experience, albeit a more subtle one, of a bharatanatyam dancer studying and teaching in certain displaced environments. It is these issues that are detailed in this chapter.

The art of body knowledge and body language

How does one get at the meanings of nonverbal forms, especially bodily forms? This is a problem familiar to anthropologists and others concerned with nonverbal forms of action or with implicit meanings in any kind of human activity. It is, moreover, a problem partially created by the very logocentricity of Western discourse. Yet until scholars are able to musick about music and dance about dance as convincingly as they talk about talk, they will have to convey through words what they believe their anthropological subjects are expressing, verbally and nonverbally (Cowan 1990: 25).

And as Weiner observes: 'The problem with us anthropologists is that we are inclined...to confuse meaning with the methods we have of making it apparent, of adducing it' (1996: 173). That I have danced about dance allows me to formulate a certain kind of inquiry in a

way that I could not do otherwise. Unavoidably for me, it is a phenomenological inquiry that extends to various levels. A dance student is always encouraged to *feel* more, to sense her body from the inside in order to achieve outer form, rather than correct a form by visual reference. The invariable indifference towards the use of mirrors in bharatanatyam classes, for example, reflects this. If a class takes place in a studio with mirrors, they are rarely referred to in any respect, and teachers may expressly turn the class to face away from them, only very occasionally asking us to turn around and check something visually.² Likewise, the large mirrors at Bhavan are of such poor quality that they are of very little use, and there is no apparent frustration at this. Observation *is* participation. In the case of bharatanatyam, we have much to learn by remaining silent—by participating and observing with our bodies, our emotions and our mind's eye. It is an esoteric and intellectual dedication as well as a practical and physical one. 'The essential point is that in traditional Indian thought there is no conceptual divide between "religious" and "scientific" knowledge' (Parry 1985: 207).

body knowledge

'Heuristically,' Lambek and Strathern write, ' "body" seems a handy term around which to organize various issues of contemporary interest in our subject' (1998: 5). How, then, in this context, should we as anthropologists regard the body? How can we usefully understand the experience of dance, which belongs most clearly and delightfully to the body, but which at the same time suggests and implies that we move beyond the body? And can we, rather, use this notion of *beyond the body* to enlarge our experience and understanding of the body?

With regard to anthropological approaches to bodily knowledge, Martin suggests that we are witnessing 'the end of one kind of body and the beginning of another kind of body' (cited in Csordas 1994: 1). The end of the body to which she refers, is that of approaches which conceive it as a fixed biological entity, where culture exists as an outside reckoning; important, shaping, but powerless against the natural and predetermined inner workings of the body. Consequently, the ensuing volume edited by Csordas (ibid.) is structured instead around the need for 'a more radical role for the body than that typical in the "anthropology of the body" that has been with us since the 1970s' (ibid.: 4). Typical approaches such as these, he argues, 'study the body and its transformations while still taking embodiment for granted' (ibid.: 5). Importantly, Lambek and Strathern (1998) emphasise the central implication of the term embodiment which integrates the hitherto separation of mind and body inherited

² This is often only the case for those students in the earlier stages of dance training. Professional and more advanced dancers may rehearse with mirrors at their own and their teacher's discretion. Video footage of teaching at Kalakshetra also shows mirrors in use, particularly for student's preparing for their arangetram.

from Descartes, and which begins to have ramifications for the construction of the person. In this frame, the body becomes integral to and implicated in an anthropology of experience—the place where ‘life and thought intersect’ (Feher 1989: 11). It allows us to construct meanings which access a culturally and individually experienced dynamic.

We are encouraged to see the body as ‘the existential ground of culture and self’ (Csordas 1994: 6). In order to develop our argument it is useful to view the body as a site of cultural and personal realisation that relates to conceptions of knowledge. As Mitchell argues after Toren (1990: 4), ‘no knowledge is ever achievable in an asocial situation, so that all knowledge is both individual and social simultaneously’ (1997: 83). Social knowledge must be identified as particular ways in which knowledge is conceived as existing. Individuals inhere systems of meanings, which reflect cultural and social conceptions of knowledge, including how knowledge is accessed and conceptualised. ‘The moment we look at the body as a system of meanings rather than a biological substance, it ceases to be merely given. It is, then, culturally created’ (Das 1985: 1810). We should also acknowledge, however, that neither is the body as biological substance a given. In this way, we can conceive of different experiences of the body, which belong to the body, and which, as I shall illustrate in the unfolding chapter, dance teachers use to generate the dance experience.

In many respects, these anthropological understandings of the body are crucial in my own work, as are aspects of the treatment of the body in Southern Indian philosophical thought.³ Here, the body consists of gross and subtle elements.⁴ Within these rests the soul (*atman*), which takes its place in three ontological categories which comprise the universe—*pati* (the Lord), *pasu* (bound souls) and *pasa* (fettters) (Davis 1991: 22). The body, the mind and the world in which we live, are all fettters to the soul. When all fettters are removed from the soul, it is liberated, and in the same state as Siva. Additionally, existence is characterised either by those things conceptualised as *cit* (consciousness), or as *jada* (inanimate substance). Identifying these Davis writes:

Jada...signifies real, material substance. In common usage, *jada* is an adjective connoting torpor, dullness, inertia, apathy, coldness, stupidity. Saiva philosophy uses this term to characterize the entire physical world. In fact, the *agamas* include within the sphere of *jada* many human faculties that we (with our very different Cartesian-based ontology) would generally characterize as immaterial and mental or psychological: the ego (*ahamkara*),

³References to Davis (1991) indicate work based on the philosophical school of Saiva Siddhanta, the Tamil school of philosophy around which much of South Indian Hindu ritual is organised.

⁴ Daniel describes in detail the notion of five bodily sheaths and their various aspects, both gross and subtle, which must be shed in order to achieve knowledge. The innermost sheath, where the soul is enclosed, represents the seat of knowledge (cf. Daniel 1984: 278-287). See also Good (2000: 281).

the synthesizing mind (*manas*), the intellect (*buddhi*), and so on. In contrast to *cit*, *jada* is inert. Substances may be altered or transformed by external forces, but they have no autonomous powers or initiative. They require consciousness to act upon or through them (ibid.: 24).

Thus he highlights how differently conceptual lines are drawn with regard to the body's place in the world, where *jada* indicates the 'meta-knowledge' described by Daniel in conversation with a fellow pilgrim: 'He seemed to indicate that I [the author], who had "meta-knowledge," or the most abstract kind of knowledge, in fact had the least knowledge' (1984: 259). The reader's imaginings, then, must begin to enter a different bodily space.

Knowledge, as we shall see, is manifest in different ways. Although, for example, during much of my time dancing, I was largely conceptually ignorant regarding the kinds of categorised descriptions outlined above, I was not experientially ignorant of these categories. Understanding the implications of this crucially enlivens our attitude to knowing. Conceiving one's body according to this bodily system clearly depends not on understanding one's self as a single biological entity, but on experiencing one's self to greater degrees. This I did. We all did. Our bodies as dancers became newly and differently experienced, and in choosing to continue dancing, we embraced this new sense of our bodies. Further, becoming aware of our movements emphasised the need for increased awareness of the internal body, which is brought into a sphere of consciousness. Consciousness is, perhaps, the apex of the relationship between mind and body.

Integrating various approaches to bodily knowledge, we can distinguish a series of oppositions and processes through which the body is perceived and made. Lambek identifies ways in which anthropological understandings may be framed within other conceptual systems:

It is my contention that body/mind or body/person distinctions are widespread, and probably universal, although obviously they need not take the same form, divide the terrain in the same manner, or reach the same proportions or significance as the Cartesian version. My argument is that mind/body dualism is at once everywhere transcended in practice yet everywhere present, in some form or other, in thought (1998: 105).

Of Saiva Siddhanta, Davis writes, '[t]he texts themselves clearly envision the *agamas* and *paddhati* literature⁵ as comprising a unity of thought and action, and accordingly I have chosen to portray Saiva Siddhanta as a coherent system of knowledge and practice' (1991:

⁵ The central texts and treatise of Saiva Siddhanta.

19). In doing so, he suggests that knowledge rests in a combination of mind and body, so, as Lambek argues, the dual aspect apparent in conceptual categories is reflected here. What of the possibility that knowledge exists *in* practice, however? The kind of knowledge that is ‘experienced rather than apprehended’ (Daniel 1984: 237)? With dual conceptions of the body—indeed of the world—it is helpful above all, to consider relationships between categories as providing a site of and for meaning. Thus Davis goes on to argue that ‘[t]he two powers of knowing and acting are ultimately unitary’ (1991: 35).

The joining of these oppositions is the dynamic of experience. Our access to an understanding of being is to see the relationship between these dual features—and other oppositional concepts in Hindu mythology, such as Siva and *sakti* (female energy)—as potentially continuous; coterminous, even. Nevertheless the dual aspect exists in order to be part of this process of integration. The point of integration is a powerful moment, and an auspicious one if carefully controlled (cf. Marglin 1985). Thus, in order to elicit appropriate control, the dancer develops her physical strength and an utter awareness of bodily movement. Through this, *rasa* emerges as knowledge which is at once objective and subjective, and consciousness, as we shall see in the conclusion to the thesis, is a kind of meta-consciousness.

Csordas recommends that we create meanings by re-casting the body as subject, and takes us into the next phase of our discussion. ‘When the body is recognized for what it is in experiential terms, not as an object but as a subject, the mind-body distinction becomes much more uncertain’ (Csordas 1989: 36). In this way, he argues, we generate theories of the body that make sense of ‘being in the world’ as phenomenologically conceived, rather than as semiotically represented. The embodied subject becomes central to the phenomenological project as outlined by Merleau-Ponty (1962), and emotions are implicated in this (Lyon & Barbalet 1994). Experience is no longer subordinate to language (Csordas 1989; Lambek and Strathern 1998). To sum up,

in general terms, the distinction between representation and being-in-the-world corresponds to that between the disciplines of semiotics and phenomenology...The dominance of semiotics over phenomenology, and hence concern with the problem of representation over the problem of being-in-the-world, is evident in the relation between the parallel distinction between “language” and “experience” (Csordas 1994: 25).

A careful consideration of these ideas in relation to the dance context, however, suggests that a closer integration of all categories can be our most revealing tool, which I consider in the

following section. This in turn facilitates the scholarly project, where we must invariably resort to language to express ideas regarding bodily and experiential knowledge.⁶

body language

As a dance form, however, *bharatanatyam* leads us paradoxically to consider language as an important referent in embodied processes. Within the general body of literature concerning dance I engage most clearly with those interested in phenomenological understandings (Sheets-Johnstone 1980; Hughes-Freeland 1986; Fraleigh 1993). Elsewhere, dance scholars and anthropologists have discussed dance in terms of ritual (Spencer 1985; Marglin 1985), gender and sexuality (Hanna 1988; Cowan 1990; Thomas 1993), or politics and identity (Cowan 1990; Gaston 1991; Stokes 1994; Washabaugh 1996; Hughes-Freeland 1997a)—although many touch tangentially on issues of experience. Specific ethnography concerning Indian dance also engages these categories (Marglin 1985, 1990; Gaston 1991, 1996). More experientially based writing about *bharatanatyam* comes from dancers themselves (Meduri 1988), or Indian aesthetic theorists (Coomaraswamy 1918, 1936).

It is Kersenboom's analysis of the Tamil *text* through *bharatanatyam* (1995) which points us most clearly in the direction of existential experience. Bloch tells us that '[i]nstead of taking language for granted, we should see its presence as requiring explanation' (1990: 92). Neither, however, should we take the *character* of language for granted, as Bloch tends towards in his otherwise helpful article. Rather, we must give language a context. 'Words may have conventional meanings, but these conventions are not given *a priori* but have to be worked at: each is the product of a historical struggle, and each a site of ongoing contestation' (Ingold 1996: 152). Context, with particular reference to my interest here, can also be viewed in terms of the ontological status of knowledge. Words are implicated in a *theoretical* struggle as to where their definition finds its true end. In other words, in what senses words become meaningful.

Kersenboom challenges us to problematise language and thus problematise the phenomenological - semiotic divide cited earlier. Tamil verse is at once semiotic and phenomenological. As we shall see, it is helpful to understand this aspect of language as subject to the same artistic ideals outlined in the previous chapter. Additionally, Tamil is somatised as a feminine form (Ramaswamy 1997). Her embodiment as goddess, mother and maiden connects the language not only to the physical form, but to an emotional repertoire

⁶ See also the connected discussion in the Introduction.

also. Thus we have many instances in *bharatanatyam*, and especially in the expressive aspects of the dance, where language is fully embodied in the communication, understanding and performance of emotion. Language becomes felt; only then is it both comprehended and comprehensible. It is these aspects of language that must become interesting to us, and are often most easily identified in the poetic form.⁷ Weiner, for example, comments on Foy poetic imagery which 'invests the social world of discourse with the compelling immediacy of lived experience' (1991: 7). In further examples of representations of language, Finnegan considers performance as an important defining aspect of oral poetry. '[A] piece of oral literature, to reach its full actualisation, must be performed. The text alone cannot constitute the oral poem' (1977: 28). This, too, emphasises its character as art and as aesthetic expression: 'In this sense, an oral poem is essentially an ephemeral work of art, and has no existence or continuity apart from its performance' (op. cit.).

Our awareness is drawn to the *location* of meaning in these and other linguistic acts. As Ingold states: 'the crucial problem here is one about how words acquire meaning, and about whether the difference between the way in which words and other kinds of gestures acquire meaning is really one of degree or of kind' (1996: 187). People inhabit language in various ways and the varying nature of these ways makes language meaningful. Oral poetry becomes predominantly meaningful in an embodied sense through the individual character of each performance, with an emphasis on creativity, spontaneity and temporality. A *bharatanatyam* dancer, on the other hand, uses her individuality and creativity to almost opposite effect, in an act that is both temporal and timeless. Agency lies with 'the dance' as received knowledge, meaningful in the way it speaks through the individual.

Here, inhabiting both language and body is realised in a particular sense of being. It is at this point that we discover meaning. Never mutually exclusive, these two categories nevertheless provide shades of emphasis through which to view embodied meaning and the way in which language is implicated in this. Taking a moment to consider Wittgenstein, we see him similarly occupied with the location of meaning in language, in a way that helpfully incorporates emotion:

the feeling gives the words 'meaning'. But does it give the individual words their meanings? But one could also say that the feeling gave the words *truth*. And from this you can see how the concepts merge here (1953: 146).

⁷ In his discussion on the poetic form, Heidegger similarly articulates the 'possibility of undergoing an experience with language' (1971: 92).

We see that emotion can invest meaning with integrity, but how far does Wittgenstein *truly incorporate* meaning? Dance demands that we firmly connect this integrity with body-knowledge, also; 'language' and 'body-language' can be understood in parallel ways.

A clear intersection emerges. Bharatanatyam as a dance form confounds the semiotic – phenomenological divide through its relationship to knowledge and meaning. It does so because knowledge can only be defined experientially, in terms of the body and emotions, and in relation to a 'universal truth'. The body to some extent becomes text. Bharatanatyam movements are often described in terms of a 'dance vocabulary,' especially in relation to the hand gestures (mudras) which are used in abhinaya to convey the dramatic contents of a piece. To the untrained eye it can be like watching a foreign language, a comment my mother made to me on first seeing bharatanatyam performed. The body is inscribed with meaning, rendered 'iconic' in performance (cf. Alter 1992) and entering processes of signification, but not bounded by them. We can therefore use linguistic and symbolic theory to contribute to our understanding of dance in communication, and place it within theories of the body and embodied processes.

the art of the body

At the same time, we look at the body as part of an artistic process. As we have seen, dancers see themselves as artists, and the body becomes a site for the production and communication of art. I argue that this body is not the same mechanical body engaged in 'the performance of complex practical tasks' described by Bloch (1990: 187), Mauss (1950), and to a large extent, Bourdieu (1977).⁸ Whilst approaches such as these are a guide to embodied processes, we must also incorporate them into areas of symbolic analysis (cf. Napier 1992). These 'complex practical tasks' indeed parallel the processes of learning to dance, particularly, if, as I argue in chapter one, the aesthetic may equally be pragmatic and artistic. Action guides the body, and creates a body aesthetic. With these processes in place, however, the movement in dance must not be bounded in the body. Artistically, action moves beyond itself in a way that is both conscious—articulate as the object of the dance form—and unconscious—articulate through the dancer's trained body; it is symbolically and emotionally valued. Let me cite Fraleigh whose work, although written with reference to contemporary western dance, resonates with what I am trying to express:

⁸ Lock comments that 'Bourdieu's theory was explicitly grounded in the repetition of unconscious mundane bodily practices' (1993: 137).

What we can know of ourselves through dance depends on the fulfillment (sic) of our intentions in movement, on whether something occurs in the dancing according to intent that we recognize as dance. For intending to dance is intending to do something more than just move. Dance is more than movement. It is movement done with aesthetic intent. Aesthetic intent is also apparent in form sports such as diving, gymnastics, and figure skating, but is subordinated to competitive and testing intentions...To value movement aesthetically is to value it for itself, its intrinsic affective qualities. Dance movement has its own reasons for being, intrinsic to the dance and its purpose: theatrical, ritual, social, and the like...Most basically, the aesthetic refers to the affective, the entire realm of feeling and sentience. All dance pays attention to movement and its affective power (1993: 103-4).

Further, this quality in the dancer's role as artist can merge with ritual role of the devadasi, permitting dancers, if they choose (and they do not always do so), to place themselves also within a ritual aesthetic (see chapter five). Further, then, dance knowledge can be framed in terms of ritual knowledge. We are clearly dealing with a concept that is multi-dimensional in terms of analysis, and our understanding of knowledge must take a similar form.

Bodily form and gesture

Paradoxically, the ideal dance student surrenders herself to the dance, *vacating* her body to be re-inscribed with the physical and emotional qualities that bharatanatyam demands. She is 'an empty vessel which the guru must fill with knowledge, skill and virtue' (Alter 1992: 71), where these three concepts are bound into a phenomenological and morally defined category.⁹ Knowledge of the self is a process of un-becoming. The internal self is understood, the body re-experienced, according to external guidance. In theory, gaining knowledge is a process of negation—the ever-important dissolution of the ego. Thus Daniel's pilgrims sing:

Unswerving, I lost my cleverness in the bewilderment
Of ecstasy (1984: 254).

Outer worlds become subordinate to inner journeys that are monitored through and by experience.

⁹ Further discussion on the role of the guru in learning processes takes place below under the section heading 'sensing knowledge', and in chapter three.

The *process of experience*, as I argue in chapter four, confounds the tension of this apparent paradox, with a subtle negotiation between 'internal' and 'external' knowledge of body and self. So whilst I do not suggest that we as anthropologists understand the learning situation entirely according to that propounded as the bharatanatyam ideal, I do urge that we cannot discount this ideal completely in favour of a sociological account. Our anthropological vision of this process cannot wholly be the suggested 'shift from implicit knowing to explicit understanding' (Hastrup and Hervik 1994: 5), because part of our struggle is to comprehend the importance of implicit knowing over and above explicit understanding. We have to operate on two different levels in order to balance our approach to processes of knowing, in much the same way that dancers oscillate between, and incorporate, a double sense of self (see later sections and chapter four). The moral ideal surrounding knowledge, which explicitly advocates the student's role as passive, informs the emotional senses with which a student experiences knowledge. At the same time, teachers engage strategies which reveal and encompass social scientific theories of participatory and interconnected processes of self and world (Lave and Wenger 1991) as important contributions to the formulation knowledge.

Ultimately, knowledge of the inner and emotional knowledge¹⁰ exist in a tangible communicable sense that moves between bodies through the outward display of gesture and symbol that correspond to an inner emotional sense. In practice, I will argue, this is a complex interaction of the dancer's own self and history with that provided by the dance, the outcome and relationship of which is facilitated and articulated by her teacher. In the case of a student unfamiliar with dance knowledge it is a case of appreciating the relationship between meaning, experience and practice. '[B]odily experiences are themselves culturally defined and derive their meaning as *human* experiences from the cultural definition given to them' (Das 1985: 196).

Discussing the historical development of the dance, Marglin connects everyday processes of embodiment to dance forms. As we have seen, she assesses the latter as being refined

¹⁰ In her conclusion of *Unnatural Emotions* (1988), Lutz talks of the tension between emotional and academic discourse. Referring to Habermas (1977) and Geuss (1981), she discusses the 'technical interest' round which social scientific analytic interest is focused: 'The technical interest is a prominent force in the construction of what passes as knowledge (specifically, equating it with precision) and is concerned primarily with the prediction and control of the environment and behaviour...Emotions also tend to be portrayed as discrete or separate entities as a result of the need to measure' (Lutz 1988: 220). The tensions which I address are not of this nature. Indian theories of emotion *are*, in fact, concerned with naming emotions as discrete entities, and subjecting them to control both by individuals, and as interactive meanings. The tension that exists in my discussion is rather one relating to the value of experience in the acquisition of knowledge, and subsequently the experience of meaning.

versions of the former. 'The dance vocabulary is clearly based on the raw material of these spontaneously occurring expressive gestures' (1990: 221). In India this was strikingly obvious to me. As I look down from my window, there is a tall girl shouting across the street in mock exasperation. Her hands fold and unfold in gestures only familiar to me through dance, and only familiar to her through living on that street in that country. It is true that '[a]ction in the world is necessarily bodily, but it is also complex, for movements are never simply individual ones; they are always associative and therefore communicative, a process in which emotion is ever implicated' (Lyon 1995: 256).

Madam was ever colourful in her representation of this. With her, it was difficult to draw the line between her everyday gestures and expressions, and those injected into her conversation because of her dance. There was, in fact, no line. So immersed was her life in dance that she unselfconsciously danced as she spoke; not in the fully stylised manner of dance vocabulary, of course, but dancing all the same. Even I, my ability to comprehend spoken Tamil non-existent, could sit for the required hour or two following a dance class and watch her chatting, with a sense of understanding simply based on the inflection in her eye, or the quick and delicate formations of her fingers.

How is all this relevant and accessible to the dancer who has no body-knowledge of the culture traditional to bharatanatyam? On a different journey, she must rely entirely on taught gesture and transferred conceptions of emotion. Within each gesture is, then, a cultural memory, in which the body is educated. It is a process of embodiment which is eventually experientially defined, and comparable to Bourdieu's definition of body *hexis* as 'political mythology realized, *em-bodied*, turned into a permanent disposition, a durable manner of standing, speaking, and thereby of *feeling* and *thinking*' (1977: 93-4). Regarding Madam, we can see that 'a durable manner' is indeed so, so entirely is her being formed by her life as dancer. Her daily presentation of self seamlessly interacts with her artistic and historical self. For the dancer in a class that is very much more bounded, however, 'durable' has a mutable quality. Whilst the embodied and emotional forms of bharatanatyam do become part of a dancer's life as a whole, they have their roots in a dance class, and stay more firmly planted there. Hence the sense of a 'double life' of the learning experience, which I heard students studying in the UK refer to.

Bourdieu continues by saying:

the principles em-bodied in this way are placed beyond the grasp of consciousness, and hence cannot be touched by voluntary deliberate transformation, cannot even be made explicit; nothing seems more ineffable,

more incommunicable, more inimitable, and, therefore more precious, than the values given body, *made* body by the transubstantiation achieved by the hidden persuasion of an implicit pedagogy, capable of instilling a whole cosmology, an ethic, a metaphysic, a political philosophy (1977: 94).

We are dealing with a different path to embodiment which encompasses additional levels of consciousness, and thereby of experiencing the body, than those suggested by Bourdieu. Dance makes movements and feelings of the body equally as precious, not, initially, for the reasons given by Bourdieu, but because they make the body into art. Embodied principles *are made* conscious and explicit, are voluntarily transformed, and are communicated as such by teachers to students. Only through this process do they once again revert to the unconscious and become part of a communicative genre fully embodied in Bourdieu's sense. In this way, dancing leads to a re-evaluation of the terms 'conscious' and 'unconscious'.

Marglin cites the development of dance forms as part of the wider historical sequence through which the dance was created.

What I have called the refining of the thinking-feeling body is a vocabulary of highly stereotyped and formalised gestures evolved over some two millennia. They are not directly related to the dancer's own spontaneous communicative gestures; instead, they are related to the collective and spontaneous style of South Asian gestures and non-verbal expressions for thoughts and emotions (1990: 223).

This may be true for dance in performance, but there is a further dynamic. The process of investing form with feeling uses personal emotion, if not gesture, with the explicit result of new dance and embodied memories entering the individual. The path by which one becomes a dancer moves through various states of consciousness and spontaneity. Rather than simply being a series of movements which become embodied and unconscious, it is a development of a physical and emotional awareness—an explicit and self-conscious move towards an implicit and embodied consciousness, with the resulting experience belonging to neither state. In many ways, creating a category of the unconscious as opposed to the conscious succeeds in objectifying experience, where in fact a fluid movement between varying degrees of a single state seems to be more appropriate. So when Wittgenstein asks, 'is what you call "knowledge" a state of consciousness or a process' (1953: 149), we must acknowledge that it is both.

Bodily forms and emotions are treated as the 'scientific art' of chapter one, thereby reflecting perceptions of knowledge. The body is not mystified, its workings ineffable, because it is only through awareness that the individual finds the key to knowledge. Through this new-

found knowledge, the body is transformed in a communicative act that is indeed mysterious because it generates and represents divine beauty. Analyses that see embodied knowledge as particular do so in an over-simplified division which places it opposition to other kinds of knowledge (of, say, mindful intellect). We must rather acknowledge differing principles in their implication for and anthropology of bodily and embodied knowledge. I am not arguing that we should not view body knowledge as particular, simply that we should be sure in what sense we do so, and that within the particular there are a number of levels.

Sensing knowledge

As a preliminary to this section, I turn again to Bourdieu, who highlights for us the multiplicity of sense, writing of:

the *socially informed body*, with all its tastes and distastes, its compulsions and repulsions, with, in a word, all its *senses*, that is to say, not only the traditional five senses...but also the sense of necessity and the sense of duty, the sense of direction and the sense of reality, the sense of balance and the sense of beauty, common sense and the sense of the sacred, tactical sense and the sense of responsibility, business sense and the sense of propriety, the sense of humour and the sense of absurdity, moral sense and the sense of practicality, and so on (Bourdieu 1977: 124).

Where does bharatanatyam teach us to locate sense?

no questions asked

A student of bharatanatyam, unfamiliar with the cultural environment surrounding it, often finds herself not only learning how to dance, but learning how to learn, revealing 'a syndrome of attitudes to knowledge' (Barth 1975: 219). We realise that we may be 'profoundly handicapped by being captive to ways of understanding, including a view of how best to *obtain* understanding' (Wikan 1990: 270). Wikan observes how such assumptions were 'judged to be "illusory"' (op. cit.) in her own fieldwork situation. With my first teacher, I found that ways of learning and behaving in a dance class, and hence in life in general, were often antithetical to those I was expected to take as anthropologist. That I was thus influenced reveals a valuable source of understanding which I relate to existing literature.

The system of knowledge introduced to me was one based on acceptance. Asking questions was more often than not dismissed as irrelevant to the learning process. 'Since the guru provides a life-line to past tradition, his authority is paramount and a sceptical scrutiny of his teaching discountenanced' (Parry 1985: 220). Both student and teacher acknowledge the basic premise that 'a disciple cannot take knowledge; it must be given, and the exercise of learning is to prepare oneself to receive' (ibid.: 66). The guru, in turn, is trusted to act in the best interest of their student in terms of the art-form.

Sharp observation of the teacher and of other students, the execution of movements as corrected, with humility, is more highly regarded as the ideal route to learning. This echoes many reports of more 'traditional' learning, both in dance, music, and other artistic forms. Descriptions of Sanjukta Panigrahi, say: '[d]uring her apprenticeship she had revered the rules and the forms that were passed down from one generation to another through the teachings of the gurus, without ever questioning them' (Varley 1998: 252). It is also true of wider contexts of apprenticeship learning, 'supported by an ideology according to which a good craftsman does not speak in order to teach an apprentice; it is the apprentice's eyes and sense of sound and touch that guide the acquisition of technical knowledge' (Herzfeld 1995: 137). Both instances reveal situations of learning where knowledge is technical, performed and embodied.

In this pristine system, reading books about dance is also frowned upon. 'Reading and private study pile up data, but not discrimination' (Kersenboom 1995: 94). Practical processes of teaching and learning become of paramount importance. 'Without the guidance of a guru, book learning is said to be without value and even an obstacle to the acquisition of knowledge' (Parry 1985: 209-210). Dance, as a language of the body, cannot be understood with recourse to written language. Rather, in these situations, the guru encompasses text. 'The authoritative text in the living tradition is the master's embodied practice' (Zarrilli 1989: 11). Such rules are not explicit. They are a subtle process of expectation and understanding, of heeding the expectations placed on others and applying them to yourself, or of clarifying things with fellow students. 'Can one learn knowledge? Yes; some can. Not, however, by taking a course in it, but through experience' (Wittgenstein 1953: 227).

In my first class with Anusha in London, one student, typical of the attitude of a number of older students new to the dance, enquired if there were any books he could read. In my diary I write:

Anusha is hesitant, but at the same time seems prepared for this question. She says there are very few good or suitable books. It is not a thing people write about, and if they do, it is always very theoretical. 'It's because in India, people don't learn with books. They dance every day, or thrice a week at least, so they don't need books.' But she thinks that here, books would be useful to help people remember, because they only have one class a week.

We see that using books is an 'issue' which teachers increasingly have to tackle, re-evaluating teaching techniques in the process. My first teacher was not entirely of Anusha's pragmatic ilk. She wanted to approve any books that we might like to read about bharatanatyam, or preferably, that we did not wish to read them at all.¹¹

Understandably, this inhibited my position as anthropologist, interfering with the expectations of academic inquiry where books are a useful and invaluable source of knowledge. Inquiry, indeed, was out of the question. I had to think of new ways to negotiate and articulate meaning which, at least initially, bypassed the inquisitive nature of my discipline. How was this important? Important because it highlights in the starkest way the extensive theoretical gap between the two knowledge systems I was part of, and that modern bharatanatyam dancers are now part of. Later, with this fully realised, I could sense more easily the tensions created by the necessity of bringing two opposing knowledge systems together in environments where they so clearly overlapped—within students, within teachers, within institutions. The modern experience of dance, therefore, has to find ways to negotiate and experientially resolve paradoxes *between* systems.

Invariably, the reaction to anyone asking what was considered 'too many questions' in class was thus: 'Why do you always ask questions? In India people don't ask questions like you [meaning you westerners] do.' In this way, 'India' is set up as a different and preferable learning environment. Students faced with such comments are immediately made aware of their own epistemological shortcomings. In India, however, it is ironically more acceptable for students from abroad to ask questions, most especially in teaching situations which are sporadic or transitory—students on six-monthly or yearly scholarships, for example. Indeed, it is expected of them and may demonstrate a lively interest in the dance. Teaching situations, then, seem inconsistent, but can be usefully framed within wider examples found in literature concerning Indian arts. In doing so, we begin to understand the premises round which certain attitudes are built, regardless of the circumstances in which they may be

¹¹ We can also see themes emerging through these examples about the 'difference' perceived between learning in India, and learning in the UK, as well as the crucial role of the guru in controlling learning situations, both of which are discussed in ensuing chapters.

wantonly ignored, the latter being attributable to the idiosyncrasies of individual gurus and teachers otherwise engaged in a common cause.

how knowledge exists

To understand the ways in which dance knowledge operates we can turn to various learning situations that take recourse to Hindu philosophy. Here, knowledge exists in full, and is there to be *recovered* rather than *discovered* (Parry 1985). Similarly in Islamic knowledge, 'the emphasis in transmitting this knowledge is conservational' (Eikelman 1978: 490). True knowledge is the realisation of the inner self as God; a transcending from one way of viewing the world to another, more truthful view, where the subtle body is fully experienced. Inden suggests a basis for the reconciliation of alternative ways of perceiving knowledge and of conducting and presenting fieldwork:

To begin with, a scholar would want to make a conscious break with the assumption (made for the most part unconsciously) that the world is constituted as a determinate, single, external reality and with its corollary a unitary human nature...He or she would assume instead that all humans are constrained by the same indeterminate reality and must take that into account in any body of knowledge they produce (1986: 446).

With a strong emphasis on experience, we can relate these concepts of knowledge to aspects of self and identity, to be more widely discussed in chapter four. We have a situation in which knowledge is discovered (experientially) *as* an individual, but, since it is recovered knowledge, it isn't an experience that *makes you* an individual. Rukmini Devi, speaking at a conference on Indian dance in 1954, said: 'On rare occasions there are born messengers of art who create something great and by that creation give to the world a vision of the life to be. Such messengers do not invent anything new, they just feel the reality and reveal it, almost unconsciously' (cited in Varley 1998: 273).

Parry's (1985) analysis of Benarasi Brahmans confirms that Hindu systems of knowledge may confound those of the anthropologist. He says: 'during my Benares fieldwork I was continually being upbraided for wasting my time with meaningless enquiries of a sociological character', in view of the fact that 'real knowledge is knowledge of metaphysical truth which liberates the soul from the endless cycle of existence' (ibid.: 206).¹² Throughout my fieldwork, I unavoidably privileged the system of knowledge that I

¹² It is interesting that Parry emphasises knowledge of 'a sociological character' as particularly misunderstood. It is undoubtedly the case that my involvement with anthropology, falling into the above category, was particularly meaningless and antithetical to the dancer's endeavour, eliciting a

encountered through bharatanatyam. Back in the realm of 'sociological enquiry', I require the reader to similarly set aside one view of meaningful knowledge in order to sense another, thereby giving a truer representation of meaning as I encountered it. 'Culture is public because meaning is' (Geertz 1973: 12), but as we have seen, meaning, although public, may also be 'private' and is certainly not axiomatic. For this reason, theories relating to techniques of the body become important—the body in performance, and in ritual, the body as sign, and as experienced.

understanding

Try not to think of understanding as a 'mental process' at all.—For that is the expression which confuses you (Wittgenstein 1953: 61).

Let us consider how

there are specific techniques of knowing and of self knowledge that we regularly mystify, and, hence, alienate; and furthermore, that these realms are, at least in part, knowable once we make the effort to demystify them by agreeing to approach them experientially (Napier 1992: xxiv-xxv).

The inclination to mystify knowledge happens at a number of levels. Inherent in this are issues of moral and social power. The tendency to mystify bodily and emotional knowledge within academic discourse, for example, connects with how the body is perceived. Conceiving certain types of knowledge as lending themselves to mystification depends on how they are understood, and stand, in terms of analysis. Let us consider aspects of dance knowledge, also, in which mystification, though not, perhaps, of the body, is a fundamental characteristic of knowledge.

Talking about Islamic knowledge, Eickelman, drawing on Hodgson, directs our attention to the essential mystery that we ourselves do not identify with knowledge.

Marshall Hodgson states that education was 'commonly conceived as the teaching of fixed and memorizable statements and formulas which could be learned *without any process of thinking as such*' (1974: 438; italics mine, D.E.). The last phrase raises the crucial issue of the meaning of 'understanding' associated with such a concept of knowledge (1978: 489).

more acrimonious response from my first teacher than other students engaged in similarly academic, but more 'scientific' disciplines, such as chemistry, economics or law. This was compounded, of course, by the fact the sociological subject of my inquiry was the dance itself, as I have explained.

Barth makes an analogous observation concerning the essentially powerful mystery of ritual knowledge in Baktaman initiation, and its connection with secrecy and the experience of that knowledge: 'Secrecy is an essential precondition of this mystery. It dramatises and inculcates a deep emotional experience of the partial nature of our understanding compared to the uncharted fulness (sic) of reality' (1975: 221).¹³

What, therefore, does it mean to 'understand'? How does the concept of learning accommodate this in terms of dance, and in dance's relationship to language? We already know that dance embraces the concept of fixed knowledge, and this connects with the traditional teaching system of gurukulam that displaces student authority, including their ability to define understanding. The situation is very much as the one outlined by Zarrilli who writes:

Martial masters are hands-on practitioners normally unconcerned with explaining what they do or how they do it. Their traditional concern is to transmit the techniques of practice to their students...it is not necessary that the student be able to explain what is happening in his practice, or what he experiences during his years of apprenticeship (1989: 1305).

Understanding is lodged in practice. Thus we find in Parry's (1985) analysis of Brahman literary tradition, that the meaning of Sanskrit texts lies more in their vocalisation—in the ability to pronounce the words accurately—than in their literal translation. Similarly, priests in Chidambaram recounted the importance of sitting near enough to the priest teaching Sanskrit chanting in order that the frequency rhythms could be felt in the body, and thereby understood by the body. 'We may better find our way to "intelligibles" through "sensibles" than through concepts' (Turner 1985: 225).

Likewise, dancers learn items (i.e. song and choreography) with a varied amount of emphasis placed on the translation of lyrics. Some teachers emphasise the importance of the translation of Sanskrit or Tamil words into their English equivalent. Others will deem any translation other than gesture and expression to be irrelevant, at least initially. Either way, I suggest that the dancer primarily understands a piece through the physical and emotional comprehension of action and expression. These are, after all, her most basic tools of communication. They allow her to express nuance after nuance, and improvise several interpretations equivalent to one line of language. Coomaraswamy says of singing, 'the

¹³ I am aware that using Barth's observations thus, may misrepresent his own opinion presented in a later article (1990) where he discusses the fundamental *differences* that he identifies in the way knowledge is handled by the guru in Southeast Asian traditions and by the initiator in Melanesia. I beg to differ in some respects, which is why I find it appropriate to use the comparison here.

words are regarded merely as the vehicle of the music: in art-song...the words are always brief, voicing a mood rather than telling a story' (1918: 78). Words become iconic in the way they are used to communicate multiple layers of meaning.

Manisha has invited me to her house in a quiet suburban area of Surrey. Sitting at the kitchen table, I am enraptured by her performing several interpretations of one theme which encapsulates different *nayikas*.¹⁴ A woman, reacting to her lover's return, suspecting he has been with another woman, could berate him playfully, be angry and unforgiving, be hurt and vulnerable. She could mean how she looks, or she could be putting it on. She could be anxiously waiting, hovering by the window, or she could be cold and indifferent to his return. In whichever mood, she expresses her love.

Guruji leaves a senior student in charge of our class at Bhavan. She is teaching us a dance for which she knows the English translation, but suddenly, halfway through a demonstration, she 'can't remember exactly what it [the Sanskrit] means.' Puzzlement rests on her face for only a few seconds and quickly passes. 'It doesn't matter,' she says. It doesn't matter. She shows the full *abhinaya* sequence, and we copy. The class is unfazed. Similarly, experiences of learning *abhinaya* with my first teacher, and in many ways with Madam, relied entirely on sharp observation of each chosen *mudra*, each tiny gesture of expression in her smile, and the overall sense of her in the movement. Only later, when she saw fit, might she connect the movement with a specific word or phrase in the song. More usually, we gained a general explanation, detailed instruction as to how a word should be *pronounced*, and a lasting impression of how the piece should *be*.

As academics and anthropologists, we are in danger of assuming ignorance where it is not warranted. Of Hindu text, Babb tells us that they have two levels of significance:

first of all, a kind of intrinsic magical potency: the chanting of *mantras* of which it is composed is a way of tapping the supernatural power represented by the goddess. But the *mantras* have real meaning, as together they constitute one of the principal scriptural delineations of the nature of the goddess (1970: 139).

These subtleties of language give away a potential bias. Babb presents us with two kinds of meaning, or significance, but privileges the second as representing 'real meaning'. As Tambiah observes in his essay on 'the magical power of words', '*mantra* do not fall outside the requirements of language as a system of communication, and their literal intelligibility to

¹⁴ See chapter four.

humans is not the critical factor in understanding their logic' (1968: 178). Language plays an important performative role. Illustrating this, we see that chanting in the context of priestly ritual requires that texts *be performed* correctly in order to *be performative*. Thus, not only understanding, but efficacy also, is lodged in practice. Further, because priests aspire to transform into the divine Siva (Fuller 1985: 107), meaning is an attempt to *experience*, comparable to the aesthetic beauty of dance. 'With Siva's presence, the world is infused with meaning' (Mowry 1983: 47). And as Timm articulates 'all scriptures, all sentences, all words become recognised as the means for eternal knowledge because one realizes that God becomes manifest through all linguistic forms' (1992: 139).

If it is the case that 'cosmological time, and with it, religious meaning, are conflated into present time and emotional experience' (Lynch 1988: 182), the significance of ritual lies more in action (including the recitation of text) than in cognition of action. Cort observes this in contemporary Jain understandings of the scriptures where pursuit of knowledge

is not an intellectual one based upon study and reflection, but rather a devotional one based upon praise and worship of the salvific knowledge contained within the Agamas and the *sastras*. These instances also indicate that, in part at least, obtaining this salvific knowledge is less an epistemological process of scholarly study, and more an ontological process of causing the qualities of knowledge to arise in one's soul through ritual devotion, veneration, and approval (1992: 187).

Das argues that 'the body which is called into existence in the course of ritual is not a biological substance defined in sensory experience...it comes to be redefined as morally appropriate for the incumbent of a particular status' (1985: 188). I suggest, rather, that in everyday and individual ritual, and in more elaborate rituals of the priests and devadasis, and in bharatanatyam, biological substance, sensory experience and action are *all* morally defined and intrinsic to meaning.

acting accordingly

Later in her analysis, Das usefully observes:

While individual ritual actions have pragmatic rather than logical ends, it is mistaken to suppose that the internal logic of symbolic systems is not relevant to their understanding. Individuals are aware of the sense of the symbolic code available for their use, even though this code remains virtual until actualised in individual acts. It is this code which provides individuals with categories of description that distinguish them as

members of one culture as opposed to another culture. It is also the code which provides a guide to action (1985: 202).

These ideas surfaced during my time in India. In Chidambaram I was always an anomaly in the temple, albeit a familiar one. I fitted no category and rarely gave any explanation for my presence. As I moved through the temples and shrines I found I was unable to engage the anthropological part of myself dedicated to inquiry. No urgent list of questions existed in my head, no whys or wherefores. I felt uncomfortable with questioning people's activities, either to their faces or in my head. I became both an extreme observer and an extreme participator. I watched and registered people's gestures and movements, the time and space they occupied in the temple, the fleeting expressions crossing their faces, their interaction with others. Like the little girl I glimpsed, taken down from her father's shoulders to prostrate in front of the deity, I learned and performed gestures and practices without question until they became incorporated as my own.¹⁵

In retrospect, adopting this method seemed a wholly appropriate and informative way for me to approach my work, compatible with the sense in which my dance training had instructed me hitherto, and appropriate to the construction of anthropological meanings. Meaningful understanding is an education of the senses, and an awareness of sensibilities. During a dance class in India I was told we first experience emotion through the eyes; if we see, say, a flower, the experience of the flower enters our vision there. We have twenty-two eyes—our two eyes and ten on the ends of our fingers and toes. Is the implication here, that we see through touch? The experience of touching, as a sensual experience, is vision.¹⁶ In the same way, we must understand the oft-quoted phrase which came up in conversations about Hindu aesthetics: 'How can you explain honey to someone if they do not know what sweet is? They have to taste it!'

We therefore see that through the study and practice of *bharatanatyam*, we can formulate a wider theory about a meaningful approach to general aesthetic and embodied processes. Observation exists as a means of experience, rather than inquiry. We become aware of the

¹⁵ Again, it is an interesting comparison to cite Barth's observations of the way new information is handled by novices after Baktaman initiation: '...it is *not* explored in conversation to pursue its implications, not exploited to discover connection, deeper meanings, and hidden secrets...So, there is not only an inhibition against speaking about the revelations of Baktaman initiations, but a wariness and vagueness in *thinking* about them...In this sense, the ritual symbols of the Baktaman are *not* 'good to think'. Their credibility and conviction arise from the fact that they are 'good to act', in their proper setting' (1975: 220-221; original italics).

¹⁶ A surprisingly similar connection between sight and touch is related by Gow in his discussion of Piro designs, which in turn relates the discussion to the preceding chapter: 'My informants, intrigued by a design, would follow the painted lines with their fingers and then declare, 'This is really beautiful! This woman can really paint well!' (1999: 232).

way our own expectations of knowledge are prioritised, and using this awareness, formulate experiential approaches which act as an end in themselves. In the process, anthropologists 'open their senses to the worlds of their others' (Stoller 1989: 7). In a similar way to Balinese conceptualisation of learning, '[k]nowledge and experience...are two aspects of the same. It does not work to proceed to search for knowledge otherwise than one proceeds to live in the world' (Wikan 1990: 270).

Contextualising knowledge and experience

Ideas I have presented thus far represent, in part, an ideal view. This does not deprive it of relevance. It is an aspect of the substantial experience of dancing, framed within Indian theories of knowledge, and anthropological theories of the body and embodied processes. Eickelman reminds us, however, that all such processes must be evaluated in terms of a historical and political context where various bodies of knowledge, including western knowledge co-exist: 'This issue directly involves the relation of knowledge to society...and the way in which value is placed on various bodies of knowledge and its carriers' (Eickelman 1978: 509). I use this as a starting point for my evaluations of knowledge as it is perceived in contexts which are syncretic, competitive and politicised.

Let me explain further my choice to use body-centred analyses to describe a dance form that is, in fact, explicitly text-based. Rooted in the *Natyasastra* and *rasa* theory, many current academic studies of dance still return to the *Natyasastra* both to re-imagine (Iyer 1999) and to practically remodel dance technique (Subramanian 1998). The initial reconstruction of *bharatanatyam* as a respectable form took much credence from the *Natyasastra*. In doing so, people succeeded in elevating dance from its *devadasi* associations and lending it a more scholarly based aspect, which it retains today. In Chennai, and throughout the dance world, *bharatanatyam* has a huge academic base. It provides a forum in which dance also becomes discourse. Dance and dancers are judged according to recognisable standards, and by recognisable people. It is a political activity. It is no longer enough simply to dance. One must be able to talk about dance, to justify one's dance, to demonstrate knowledge that goes beyond the body, and is linguistically and historically based. Such scholarly activity does as much to define dance as the more experiential definitions that I offer. They are two halves of a social and cultural whole. I emphasise the latter, as it most clearly represents both my fieldwork and academic interests, others have chosen to emphasise the former (cf. Gaston 1991 & 1996).

I argue that academic discourse surrounding *bharatanatyam* does not rest easily with equally pervasive aspirations to aesthetic and experienced knowledge. The *Natyasastra*, though implicitly complete in its descriptive knowledge, is explicitly *incomplete* in its access to this knowledge, which must be fulfilled through experience. Whilst there are elements within *bharatanatyam* discourse which follow the pattern of western academic and scholarly discourse, it is not appropriate for dancers to experience their dance thus. It throws up the aforementioned tension that exists between opposing conceptions of knowledge, that dancers continually need to resolve on a personal level in order to inform their approach to *bharatanatyam* as students, teachers, and performers. They begin to develop context-related and felt personas, which they use to make sense of the way they understand dance as part of their practical and emotional lives and where feelings are associated with a variety of meanings.¹⁷ Because these personas are part of a dancer's sense of self, they are never entirely exclusive and cannot entirely resolve themselves as context-bound. This contributes to feelings of tension and difficulty where dancing is not part of a totally integrated lifestyle. It is the root of 'the special schizophrenia of the contemporary dancer' described by Meduri (1988: 7), herself a *bharatanatyam* dancer now working in the United States. She goes on to clarify the point:

today the dancer is forced to play fully the dual roles of traditional and modern woman: onstage she dances the stories of the gods, while offstage in a ruthlessly competitive secular world she must be both intelligent and ambitious. These two opposing world views are her historical inheritance, and only she knows what this inner tension does to her (ibid.: 12).¹⁸

We must understand these processes in a similar way to that outlined by Lambek, which is, in fact, very much the formative basis of dance knowledge:

[T]he focus on practice and the focus on thought are neither mutually exclusive or redundant, but incommensurable with one another, covering the ground in different kinds of ways. It is as misleading to try and understand thought and practice in isolation from one another as it is to attempt to conflate them or to imagine one could capture them in the same structure (1998: 119).

¹⁷ Leavitt (1996) discusses anthropological implications concerning the relationship between meaning and feeling. In many ways, his argument is born out of an axiomatic notion that a divide between meaning and feeling exists, which, as I argue, makes no sense in terms of *bharatanatyam* and wider Hindu philosophical thought.

¹⁸ Meduri frames this as part of a discussion about the secularisation of dance. Part of the tension, she argues, comes from *bharatanatyam*'s identity resting both with its ritual roots as part of temple ritual, and its contemporary identity where it is performed in secular settings.

describing

Edinburgh

To illustrate these ideas further I turn in more detail to my encounters studying dance as both dancer and academic. As I have suggested, teaching in Edinburgh bharatanatyam classes, stemmed from a teaching line emphasising learning in a traditional system of body-knowledge and discipline, with no recourse to text. The student is expected to demonstrate humility and dedication in deference to the art, inhibiting her from questioning knowledge or teaching methods, thereby developing a moral code associated with the dance.

Concomitant with these attitudes is the authority of the teacher or guru to decide the nature of each student's progress as an individual, and to influence her lifestyle as a whole. Gurus watch their pupils closely to scrutinise those physical changes which in turn indicate the emotional maturity to take the dance further. 'The student should begin to manifest physical, mental and behavioural signs which result from practice. In the traditional mode of teaching, only as the student's practice manifests such signs will he (sic) be introduced to more advanced exercises' (Zarrilli 1989: 1292). As we have seen, to use the term 'indicate' can be misleading; physical and emotional states are in fact simultaneous.

My teacher, however, was on a learning curve herself, teaching outside India for the first time. Trying to replicate her own dance experience was impossible, and although she was fixed in her ideals concerning bharatanatyam, she was also in a constant state of change, adaptation and compromise. The real control she could assume over our activities outwith dance classes was minimal, but her desire to do so remained, manifest in the interest she would show in our physical and personal selves. She would ask us about our diet, making suggestions that we should eat more rice and dhal, or eggs. We had to practice yoga daily. Accordingly, we all unspokenly adapted our lifestyles. She wanted to know about our menstrual history and our relationships, all of which influenced our capacity to dance, and all of which dance could influence.

Regarding the latter two, I was a particularly unsuitable candidate. My periods were always scanty, a situation which remained unchanged after two years of dancing, and blissfully unaware of the effect it would have on my dance career, I married six months into my classes as a dedicated student. The former defined me as physically weak, the latter

compromised my commitment.¹⁹ My academic commitments were at best irrelevant and at worst, disruptive to my progress, as was my decision to go and study in India of my own volition. Similarly, other students compromised their commitment and capacity to dance for different reasons. Those who had danced before, whether ballet, western contemporary dance or other forms of Indian dance, found their bodies were seen to be caught in those movements; the latter, caught also by prior commitments to another guru. Moody or uptight students were restricted in their capacity to learn with grace and humility, as were those who were naturally inquisitive.²⁰

Constraints of this kind were only applied in seriousness to the adult members of the group. As I shall explain, dancers learning as adults are placed under intense pressure to learn more quickly, including this close scrutiny of their capacity to learn as manifest in their physical and emotional selves. Younger students, although treated strictly, were also treated in a more light-hearted manner, not least, undoubtedly, because they themselves tended to care less, and because they were under direction of their parents.

On the technical level of conducting classes, we as students could trace changes in my teacher's approach through our own differing experiences, and by subsequently watching how she taught each new class of beginners. My closest dance partner started two years before me. Her entire first class was spent on the first foot movement (*chaari*) of the first *adavu*, *thattu adavu*,²¹ meaning that she basically stamped her feet in *aramandi* (half-sitting position, knees out to the side), throughout the hour (*thai-ya thai*). The whole course consisted of continuing through the *adavu*. She was the only one from the group to persevere beyond the first term.

When I started, we too began with the same *adavu*, but would practice it maybe five or six times, and include the first *three* movements. Then we would rest, learn some *mudras* and watch our teacher put them to a short piece of *abhinaya*. Then, on our feet again to learn the first one of another *adavu*, *thattu mettu* (*tha ki da*), eventually adding arm gestures. In addition to this, groups coming after me would perhaps begin to learn a short 'dance piece'

¹⁹ These two points were rarely articulated to me to my face, but comments she made to others about me confirmed how important these issues were regarding my dance. Marglin (1985) equally confirms the links between dance, menstruation and auspiciousness.

²⁰ These examples should not be taken as general symbolic factors in learning *bharatanatyam*. I use them to indicate particular ways in which the authority of teachers may be used to formulate ideal conditions of learning within students. Where the structural base of such authority is often broadly similar between teachers, particular details are not, hence these examples are a matter of contingent experience.

²¹ I.e. rhythmic combinations with the feet from one to eight.

that my teacher would choreograph using various basic exercises. Quite early on, and in response to requests for performance-demonstrations, she began to teach 'items' to the more advanced students. We began with a tillana. As I later became aware, this is the last item a dancer should learn, the first being the alarippu. In every other respect, my first experience of bharatanatyam appears ideologically closest to a gurukulam teaching relationship and style of learning, but with regard to the learning of items, every subsequent dancer and/or teacher I spoke to was shocked that I had been taught a tillana first. In fact, they thought it quite ridiculous. In no other context was the order of items to be learnt changed from the original, i.e. alarippu, jatiswaram, varnam, padam, tillana.

These teaching adjustments demonstrate a quick adaptation of teaching methods as my teacher recognised that the initial dance programme, as she herself had been taught, and how she had taught hitherto in India, was unsuitable. Students were not necessarily committing themselves as dancers in their first class. They fancied a new hobby, perhaps, and they wanted to see results; a bit of a sweat was okay, but not a physical marathon. Her persona adapted also. Generally, the knowledge system we are concerned with does not deal with praise. True for all Indian arts, we hear of a (British) apprentice to an Indian master mason: 'Varma [her master] never praised her; instead, she had to feel her way into a right relationship with her new skills.'²²

Gurus very rarely praise their students, and in turn many students do not want or expect to be praised. The levels of physical and emotional perfection in the form, although worked towards, are never attainable. Students should rid themselves of the desire to achieve. Encouragement is necessary, but praise has no place. But in the initial 'adapted' classes, and with new students, my teacher began to offer praise. We, as longer serving students, understood this was not something we could expect, and were glad for that in a perverse kind of way.

Subsequent descriptions of my fieldwork in Chidambaram and in London enlarge on the themes already outlined and introduce new ones, although on leaving Edinburgh, I was not aware of them in my mind to bring to my dance classes. Whether doing namaskar with my feet on the stone floor in India, or in a dance studio in King's Cross, or on parquet flooring

²² This extract is taken from a newspaper article (The Guardian July 13th 1999) written by Carolyn Watts. The article covers a story about Kate Dineen, a British artist apprenticed to an Indian master mason for nine years. It continues in the artist's voice: 'Then, after six years, something changed: I was grinding marble on his balcony one day and suddenly he said, 'That's very good! You've got a good feeling for grinding.' I was really happy, because it was the first time he'd commented positively on what I was doing.'

with twenty teenagers in Kensington, I was to find the majority of relevant—and revealing—information stored in my body and in my emotions.

Chidambaram

In Chidambaram, I found differing attitudes in my teachers. The priest, academic himself, with a degree in English Literature, welcomed my research. Not having physically learnt to dance himself, his own approach to teaching was very much text based. His dance experience came from teaching alongside Madam, being involved in dance as a lifelong spectator, and, importantly, belonging to the Deekshithar priests as custodians of Siva as Nataraja. He would refer to the *Natyasastra* to clarify dance particulars, and formulated *abhinaya* according to literal translations of Sanskrit or Tamil. Although surprised and disturbed by my ‘non-western’ reluctance to ask questions about anything, he nevertheless continued to impose a moral code and assume measures of control over my dance training and personal life—including what I ate, my clothes, my place of residence—according to ways inherent in traditional teaching. My fear and resistance to this (whilst at the same time complying with it ‘for the sake of dance’) was, however, ‘typical English’.

Madam held none of this kind of authority over me, as she deferred to the priest who orchestrated our classes. In her I could observe particular methods and techniques she used in her teaching, rather than in her personal attitude to me as an individual. She seemed to be relatively uninterested in me outside my capacity and enthusiasm for learning *bharatanatyam*. She liked me because I was ‘obedient’—clearly a positive moral emotional quality in her eyes. In general, she liked this in western students, together with their obvious interest in the dance. Intrinsic in this was her understanding of how ‘times have changed’ in comparison to her own learning experience. She accepted these changes as limits, and was focused on teaching dance within them.

As I have suggested, her absorption in dance as bodily practice was more obvious in her than anyone else I encountered. Her whole physical and aesthetic sense was bound up in dance, most apparent in the utterly unselfconscious manner of her teaching. Hearing her reminisce demonstrated the continuity between her daily life and her dance life, where dancers nowadays more readily express a discontinuity of self and a sense of ‘double life’. Bodily knowledge and strength gained from daily life—pulling water from the well, sweeping the

floor bending from the waist with straight legs, making *kolams*,²³ folding saris, daily worship, walking barefoot—all these prepared her for dancing.

She did not consult texts, or teach students movements with reference to muscular groups. Her partial ignorance of Sanskrit and classical Tamil, however, was highlighted when working alongside the priest. His exactitude and her own curiosity and respect would sometimes prompt her to ask for a translation of lyrics when choreographing abhinaya. In reality, she was perfectly at home without knowing exact meanings, as I realised when we had classes alone together. Always aware of the gist of a lyric, or familiar with the story from Hindu mythology, she would freely work from memory and from aesthetic intuition. Many times such freedom gave a piece a greater sense of beauty as meaning than a more exact correlation with language would allow.

Watching ways of constructing abhinaya with recourse to text, I became aware that my first dance teacher might not have been ‘all knowing’ in one sense. This was never betrayed in her own sense of authority, and never conceived in my sense of her authority. Indeed it only fleetingly exists for me now, and at a purely analytical level; not at any level where I think it matters. She, too, worked in the same way as Madam, concerned primarily with aesthetic meaning rather than meaning translated directly from a lyric. Neither had any intention to mislead, nor were in a position of mis-translating—misconceiving—a piece. They choreographed using a dancer’s embodied sense (not precluding linguistic knowledge), where they knew nothing else. Scholarly approaches rely on more heavily developed ‘linguistic’ understanding, in the form of translation, and in doing so are more easily answerable. This intellectualising of bharatanatyam, together with its emergence as a performed art form, rather than a ritual act, throws dancers open to a highly critical environment where the basis for knowledge is exposed.

London

Going to London crystallised much of my previous fieldwork and I began to appreciate patterns emerging in all areas of my research. Introducing myself to new teachers and organisations I was always in a position of having to detail my past and present agenda concerning bharatanatyam. Reactions varied.

- Akademi

²³ Kolams are traditional (usually abstract) designs which women make each morning and evening outside the threshold of the house in order to welcome the goddess Lakshmi. Traditionally they were made using rice powder, but now it is customary to use white chalk powder.

One of the first people I spoke to was the director of the organisation Akademi. Her position within the organisation was not in a teaching capacity, but as promoter and co-ordinator of all types of Indian dance in the UK. When I explained to her the resistance I had encountered in Edinburgh in trying to combine my dance training with anthropological research, she raised her eyes to the ceiling. This was a scenario familiar to her, and one she had no time for. She explained it in terms of knowledge about dance being ‘mystified’ and made exclusive by such attitudes. ‘It’s a very ‘Indian’ thing. They want to create and mould students; teachers wanting students to do everything only with their blessing’. She fully acknowledged that the organisation was trying to be more ‘western’ in their approach to dance, and assured me the classes run under their auspices would reflect that.

However, in many ways, the classes I took run by Akademi were less about the organisation than about the teacher, Anusha. Once again, charisma plays a huge part in the way a class is run, and in attitudes generated in students towards bharatanatyam. Although this *was* the most ‘western’ class I attended, a clear connection still existed with all my other experiences, sometimes at the most subtle of levels. I enlarge on this in the following chapter.

Anusha is very open and self-conscious about her teaching methods. Mystery exists in the aesthetic beauty of the dance rather than at the level of teaching. Talking to us as a group, she said:

“I feel that teaching has to take place in a very different way from the way I was taught.²⁴ People have to be helped to get involved with the dance quickly, and be able to understand. I was discussing this with another teacher friend of mine—when we were taught dance, we were told to keep our *knees* out; the movement actually comes from the *hips*. It’s not a criticism. It’s not that traditional dance teachers aren’t aware, it’s just very different teaching children.”

This introduces the way in which the body is taught to dance, and I shall clarify the meanings behind Anusha’s words. Much of the way teaching has had to adapt in western environments is to do with the age of students. Where children may start dancing anywhere between four and eight years old, people attending evening and weekend classes are often much older. There is more pressure because of time and because of bodies. People need to learn quicker, but they are physically much stiffer. A process that used to be gradual and unconscious is reversed. Praise becomes a mechanism to ‘get people involved’.

²⁴ Anusha trained initially at Kalakshetra, and then moved to continue her training with a guru, Leela Samson, in Delhi.

To 'speed things up', and to minimise the danger of injury, Anusha often explained movement in terms of physiologically defined body-parts. We were told to tuck the pelvis in, turn out from the hips, pull our stomachs up. Children do not need to know such things. Their flexible bodies absorb the correct movements over time, and through the constant repetition of exercises. Students are more traditionally corrected according to how forms should look from the outside, or by the teacher physically correcting them—touching a finger or an elbow, pulling shoulders back, trying to yank a head to the required angle. Corrections in my classes hitherto had been of this fashion, as if all students were children. Teachers were often puzzled by the nature of 'wrongness' in adult students because they themselves had no memory of how it is to learn such things as an adult.²⁵ They might try to work backwards to enable them to make corrections, but invariably the apparent movements inscribed in the body did not have a parallel inscription in the mind, and subsequently in language. Often their best recourse was to ask senior students with an already developed awareness to explain. Pre-empting this, Anusha had herself learnt the vocabulary and physiological details to teach classes in the UK,²⁶ knowledge that she says she now uses on return visits to teach and learn in India.

- Bhavan

My other dance classes in London took place at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. The Bhavan Centre is a church in the heart of West Kensington. It has a warren of practice rooms and an auditorium dominated by two huge pictures, one of Lord Mountbatten, the other, James Callaghan. It is, by and large, not a very 'western environment', as I shall enlarge on in the following chapter. In the introductory booklet, it states that its objectives are:

To focus on knowledge that can only be transferred orally or by example, from teacher to pupil.

To train successive generations of teachers to pass on such knowledge

To promote universal values without involving politics or religion

To provide a centre of learning in the UK for Indian Culture.

²⁵ All the teachers I encountered in the UK had learnt dance in India as children. There is a new generation of teachers, however, for whom this is not the case, although they will all have trained for some period in India. How this changes certain aspects of teaching I am not entirely sure. I am sure, nevertheless, that much of the basic structural aspects of knowledge remains to be passed on, so strong is the influence of teachers and gurus.

²⁶ Indian dance teachers in general are becoming aware of the need to understand and formalise this type of approach. AdiTi (the National Organisation for South Asian Dance, based in London) run an annual conference entitled 'The Healthy Dancer'. The meeting I attended in February 1999, attended by teachers of all Indian dance styles, emphasised developing an anatomical awareness of the body in order to prevent injuries, both as professional dancers and as teachers. This was not contended as anything but a positive and necessary move.

This suggests that it promotes traditional teaching methods, and certainly the bharatanatyam teacher, Guruji, is very much part of this tradition. On my first visit, he again appeared completely uninterested in anything about me, including my PhD research and seemed to 'glaze over' as I was talking. In fact, he wasn't really bothered about me *saying* anything at all. As with most dance teachers, he sees everything he needs to know about a new student in her dancing. That I was there to dance was primary, and perhaps here, more than at any other time, I realised how utterly different everything would be if I had not entered every situation as a dancer, and wanting to learn dance.

Guruji makes traditional corrections as described above, doing his fair share of physical contact to do so—playfully whacking students with 'the stick' (*tattu-kal*),²⁷ used to beat the tala, or leaning his arms heavily on a student's shoulders to bring her aramandi lower ('half-sit'). The majority of students are children and teenagers. In contrast to my previous experiences, the Bhavan has a very strong theoretical element also, in seeming contradiction to the objectives outlined above. There is a textbook,²⁸ oral, written and practical examinations and the awarding of diplomas. Students are expected to know the history of the dance, the names of rhythmic patterns, music, and a measure of Sanskrit, all examined by 'teachers from India'.

Given this element, I would argue that although teaching on a personal level is traditional, the structure surrounding it is not. Because he teaches as part of an institution, Guruji's power as guru is limited. In some respects he is simply providing a service, paid for at a (substantial) price. For example, a large class with a syllabus to follow disallows the teacher from using his own discretion so freely. Large classes hold students of varying standards, yet all belong to the same year of the diploma course. His attitude, personality and body language at times belie the system he is part of, but only acquire full autonomy and sincerity when students progress beyond diploma level. Then, it seems, 'real' teaching can begin in private classes.

It appears that both classes in London welcome a theoretical aspect to bharatanatyam. This being so, I expected to feel more able to engage my academic research as part of my learning process. Before I began classes at Bhavan, however, I realised that this was not a

²⁷ This is the wooden stick and block used by teacher to strike the tala (rhythm) during dance class and unofficially to deal out appropriate corrections. Traditionally, but now at the teacher's discretion, students file up to the front of class to offer a prayer (namaskar) in front of the *tattu-kal*, to show respect and appreciation, and ask for blessing. See further discussion of this in chapter three

²⁸ Mrinalini Sarabhai, 1996, *Understanding Bharatanatyam*.

straightforward supposition. I was chatting to Sangeeta, whose name had been given to me by a friend as a student there. Sangeeta completed her *arangetram* some years ago, and was now working with Guruji towards another performance. She was also completing an MSc in Social Anthropology with a view to starting a PhD about *bharatanatyam*. When I explained to her the resistance I had encountered from my first teacher towards my own academic work, she was most surprised. Talking further, a pattern began to emerge. When she heard how long I had been dancing (nearly four years, starting my PhD after two) she nodded; it made sense. She didn't think Guruji would approve of that—of starting so soon, before a number of sustained years simply concentrating on dancing. We are back to the familiar premise. Teachers and gurus ultimately hold authority. If students disrespect that, or take it from them by making their own decisions concerning their dance, some fundamental understanding has been broken.

The consequences are all felt consequences, but based on structural feelings and understandings encouraged and created by the knowledge system, and by the expectations of the art form. Traditional understandings of knowledge—of the parameters of knowledge, of passing on knowledge, of valued knowledge—are not easily compromised. Studies *of* dance are essentially separate from *learning to* dance because the two occupy different brackets of knowledge. In this way, whether the teacher 'approves' of my research or not, it is irrelevant in a dance class where I am simply in a position of absorbing knowledge which exists and which I am given, rather than creating knowledge of my own accord. The physical concentration and belief in the form transcend anything else for a duration of time in a bounded space. It was for this reason that both Guruji (all the time) and Anusha (some of the time) were relatively uninterested—indifferent—to my research, as was I. Again, and in spite of myself, I was focused on the business of learning *bharatanatyam* above all else. To labour the point, I am not arguing that the two cannot coexist, or that they bear no relation to one another. Rather they cannot occupy the same space at the same time.

Imagined meanings

The teaching of *bharatanatyam* highlights that, in practice, varying conceptions of knowledge exist over both time and place. *Bharatanatyam* also exists as an abstract entity, however, relying on a conception which is fixed, permanent and timeless. To conclude this chapter I see how these aspects work together to lend dance meaning.

How important are such adaptations as Anusha's, or the institutionalisation of bharatanatyam so predominant nowadays, in evaluating teaching techniques and their relationship to the place and authenticity of dance? I present two possibilities. Firstly, I suggest that they reflect an important and fundamental shift in the basis of dance knowledge. In doing so I am assuming that dance is implicitly related to a particular system of knowledge which includes theories of art, the body and emotion. Unless students are educated in this system—albeit implicitly—unless they *experience* it, bharatanatyam becomes something totally different, and in doing so, loses an intrinsic part of its meaning. Secondly, I suggest this extreme evaluation is one based on essentialist attitudes to dance which have no bearing on practical situations. In this respect, bharatanatyam can retain a meaningful identity within competing systems of knowledge through processes of adaptation and individual experience.

Illustrating the first suggestion, adaptations in teaching such as Anusha's explicit physiological reference to body parts, introduces students to particular conceptions of the body. These are almost 'disembodied' in that they reflect understandings of the body as a biological entity, and in doing so begin to separate the physical from the emotional and intellectual. They alienate the dance from its ontological base. Although images of the body in the Natyasastra are equally meticulous in physical detail, they are described in relation to emotions and uses within dance and present a different conception of the body in relation to knowledge. For example, the movements of the head:

*When the head is cast down, it is called aDhomukham
Shyness, misery, salutation, despair, swoon, indication of things
placed below, and dip in water are represented by this posture.*

*Rolling the head around is called Aalolitham.
Sleep, anxiety, possession of spirits, infatuation, swoon, roaming,
uncontrolled laughter – to represent these the head is rolled.*

*On the left and right sides, shaking the head is known as Dhutah.
While conveying it is not there, while looking at both sides, while expressing wonder,
grief, undesirable incident, the effect of cold and fever, fear, drinking of liquor, the
effect of war, forbidding, revenge, while looking at ones own limbs, shaking of the
head is resorted to, according to Bharatha and other teachers.²⁹*

Movement is taught by example and learnt by observation. The student *feels* a movement in order to understand and internalise it, rather than *knowing* prior to feeling it.

²⁹ Taken from *Laghu Bharatham: Handbook on Bharata Natyam* (Raghupathy, Sudharani & Thangaswami, Sarma 1998: 141-145). Capitalisation reflects where the stresses lie in pronunciation.

Institutionalising bharatanatyam has a twofold effect. It creates a 'syllabus' and standardisation of levels of technique, and (a related point) it disempowers the guru by limiting the control they have to teach students in a more individualised way, and by making them accountable. Knowledge is demystified on both counts. Inevitably, it is no longer utterly invested in the guru. Relationships formed are not so intense, and therefore not so emotionally informative to the student as she attempts to develop a full emotional repertoire for abhinaya.³⁰

To follow my second, more pragmatic argument, the changes simply find bharatanatyam in another phase of adjustment and re-creation. 'Pristine meaning', if it ever existed, was lost long before, with the decline of dance in temple ritual; becoming a stage art, dance was redefined. The changes taking place now are a necessary acknowledgement of a wider audience, and more especially, of a wider variety of students interested in learning bharatanatyam, and with access to do so. The simple authentication in bharatanatyam is in doing; dancing authenticates itself.

Different styles and approaches to teaching ensure that students are not alienated by an art form which demands they learn in ways that are too strange, too impossible, for them in a practical-emotional sense. Teachers develop a new awareness spawned in cross-conceptions of knowledge and in exchanges between knowledge systems. Following the earlier cited description of Sanjukta's own experience of traditional learning, we then hear that teaching and performing in western environments 'has given her a greater awareness of the principles concealed behind the blindly accepted rules of her tradition...has allowed her also to find words for what before was only body knowledge' (Varley 1998: 252 & 254). Mechanisms that draw on 'non-traditional' systems of knowledge facilitate the learning process, but produce the same result, and are always accompanied by 'traditional' characteristics intrinsic in many teacher's teaching styles and beliefs.

Ultimately, however, I argue that dancers need to find a solution that encompasses both possibilities. Bharatanatyam *must* to some extent appeal to its original knowledge context in order to exist. Every instance of teaching confirms this in varying degrees, sometimes in spite of itself. As teachers are no longer necessarily gurus and struggle to teach dance in contexts far removed from their own experience, they try new methods. In doing so they do not lose old beliefs concerning teaching practice, which exist in the subtlest of ways and

³⁰I explore this issue as pivotal to dance training in the following two chapters when I enlarge on the relationship between teaching systems and the formulation of emotion in the dance, and in dance students.

remain strongly attached to the dance's purpose and emotional content. Indeed, in its very form, the institution of gurukulam encompasses a semi-autonomous and strategic acceptance and legitimisation of change, where power is vested in individuals, students answerable to gurus, and knowledge transmitted visually and orally.

Beliefs transferred to students create a context of their own. Knowledge feeds experience and is planted and perpetuated in memory and imagination. '[T]he term *imagination* is still quite useful as a way of identifying nonsentential and nonpropositional dimensions of cognition that are now being recognized as important to meaning and cognition' (Johnson 1991: 75). Thus teachers use imagination as a tool to encourage a context which is, perhaps, constrained by the necessary adaptation of method to suit changing social and cultural environments. '[B]ody and mind in body (embodiment)' and 'body and mind in mind' (imagination)' (Lambek 1998: 105) are transformed and phenomenologically united in a sense of imagined embodiment.

Further, imagination appropriately takes its place in the comprehension of dance as a symbolic form—we see this particularly in chapter four, as students and teachers create emotional moments in the dance, and in chapter one, where a particular beauty aesthetic is engendered and embodied. Napier discusses the relationship between images and imagination. He talks of the symbol as 'an irreducible thing...beyond which reduction of a greater image becomes impossible... [I]t is the point where visualisation begins. It marks, in other words, the birth of the imagination' (1992: xxi).

If we rather understand the predominant quality in the symbolic imagination to be, in fact, iconic, as Daniel (1984: 217) suggests most clearly resonates with South Indian conceptual forms, the point of imagination embraces also a spectrum of resonances, whose quality can remain incoherent, but recognised experientially.³¹ Davis outlines a similar process to describe how people enter the world envisioned in Saiva Siddhanta:

This world is assuredly not the one we think we live in, but nevertheless it is a world we can enter, partially and temporarily, through a mental "reenactment" as R.G. Collingwood put it. The Saivas themselves would call it *bhavana*, "imaginative re-creation." For the Saivas, as for Collingwood, this reconstructive praxis is primarily intellectual and rational, rather than simply a matter of empathy (Davis 1991: ix).

³¹ For a further discussion of the symbolic and iconic in dance, see the concluding sections of chapter five.

In doing so, he not only connects with my discussion of knowledge in this chapter, but also with the methodological process outlined in the introduction to my work. Empathy *does*, however, come into play at particular moments which create felt responses to, say, symbolic or iconic stimuli. With regard to knowledge, and in Johnson's words (1987), we must look for 'the body in the mind'.³² Thus I continually emphasise that the experiential and embodied aspect of 'intellectual re-enactment' must irreducibly colour our understanding of meaning, and within this, 'forms of imaginative structuring of experience' (ibid.: xvi) play an important part.

Thus it is, that the *idea* of a traditional and an essentially pristine system of knowledge at the heart of dance that defies social, cultural and geographical and temporal boundaries, is formative in its conception. In this way, dance cleanly emerged from the soiled reputations of the devadasis, and likewise it may safely refer back to the devadasi as an example of purity and dedication. '[T]he vitality of a tradition persists only so long as it is fed by an intensity of imagination...the creative artist restores our memory' (Coomaraswamy 1918: 44). Gaston acknowledges the importance of this same process also, framing it in terms of history and authenticity:

To understand the present dynamics of the dance it is necessary to know not so much what *is* authentic or traditional in the dance, but what is *believed to be* original and traditional. Hence people's opinions about who the *devadasis* were, and how they studied and performed, become just as important as what actually took place in the south Indian temples and courts in what is now held to have been a golden age (1996: 67).

Because of a certain *belief*, all of the dancers and teachers I spoke to acknowledge the highly charged political agenda in the dance world, whilst simultaneously disassociating themselves from it. In a dancer's imagination she must be committed to the timeless and spiritual beauty of the dance, regardless of the social and cultural scenarios which surround her. They become the lesser 'reality'. With this conviction, which becomes a personally sanctioned moral obligation, she navigates and negotiates the varied and changing order of experience

³² Johnson's work (1987) which explores 'the bodily basis of meaning, imagination, and reason' is a significant reference point in this analysis. Not only does it attend to placing 'imagination' at the centre of meaningful experience, but in doing so, also emphasises, with reference to Descartes and Kant, the importance of collapsing mind-body dichotomies. In many ways, however, I am aware that work, my own included, which seeks to talk about hitherto 'unreasonable' subjects, such as emotion, imagination or creativity, often gives them credence by making them subject to reason. Whilst this is a useful and worthy aspect at times, it does in many ways confirm our intellectual values. For this reason, I continually return to unidentifiable or indeterminate categories of consciousness in order to locate a certain quality, which is both meaningful and mysterious, but not entirely 'reasonable'.

and of knowledge. Imagination inspires the embodied sense and provides the emotional framework round which to teach and be taught.

Chapter 3

Varnam: Teaching and Learning

The varnam is the central piece in the bharatanatyam repertoire. It is also the most challenging.

It is here that the dancer is able to revel in the complexities of the rhythm, music and emotional depths of the work. A *varnam* is the epitome of what bharatanatyam is about—the ever longing desire to be united with the immortal Lord, the Universal Lover (Khoo 1999).

The dancer must illustrate a physical and rhythmic confidence alongside a deep sense and understanding of the emotional content of the dance. It is the pivotal item as she moves into and expands onwards to the other pieces and to the conclusion of her performance, or of her initial stage of training.

In the same way, I use this as the pivotal chapter in my work. In it, I discuss issues surrounding the process of learning to dance. I have chosen to compare this to the *varnam*, as it forms the backbone of a dancer's experience of her dance. It provides her with the tools to practise her dance at both a physical and emotional level, and, further, shapes her very identity as a person, not only as a dancer. I consider the process by which the body and emotional system begin to form within the dancer, laying the foundations which my discussion of emotion in the following chapter build upon. As the dance is further and further absorbed into different circumstances, however, I question the ways in which both dancers and teachers cope with and adapt to new contexts, and the ultimate effect this may have on the experience of dancing.

Frameworks

traditional systems

As we have seen, with its revival in the early twentieth century, bharatanatyam was (re)invented. Thus, the context in which I find myself learning to dance, though far removed

from devadasi lifestyles, is, in fact, a continuing tradition of innovation and experimentation which bharatanatyam in its modern form has always embraced. The juxtaposition of creativity and tradition which the dancer develops and upholds within herself belongs to the discipline of dance as an abstract whole, and the two concepts cannot, in fact, be separated. The tradition of training girls both in the art of the devadasi and in the newly re-modelled bharatanatyam, however, has a huge impact on the way dance is taught today. It is alive in the rhetoric of dance teachers, tangible in the atmosphere of classes, visible through the body in performance. But it is also hidden; latent in the expectations of dance teachers, imperceptible in a student's attitude, concealed in the flicker of an eyelid.

This tradition exists mainly in the teaching of dance within a system of gurukulam. It is a tradition used throughout the arts—in learning music, martial arts, yoga, ayurvedic medicine, for example, as well as dance. In it, a student is dedicated to a single guru throughout her initial training period, if not her lifetime. The student would both live and study with her guru, who would be intimately involved in shaping her daily life. Dance classes would be part of a daily routine which involved cleaning, washing clothes, preparing food, and generally attending to her guru's well-being, and that of the household. Madam vividly recalls her day to me as she, her fellow *dasis*, and her guru's own daughters would set about their domestic chores in the hours outside dance instruction, which generally took place in the early morning and evening.

Interacting with Madam provided me with the strongest direct connection with the system of dance as part of the devadasi tradition. Madam came, I understood, from a *dasi* family; a family of temple servants where her father played as a temple musician, and where she and her sisters were expected to receive training in temple arts, be it music or dance. Several times, she told the story of her guru coming to her house at the request of her parents, scrutinising her and her sisters as they stood before him, and choosing Madam as the only one suitable to train as a dancer. In her he glimpsed the physiognomic characteristics of a dancer which the others lacked, and although one went on to study music, the rest were rejected for dance careers. Madam told me the whole family were pleased for her, and worked together to pool economic resources to support her career—in other words, to pay her guru.

Madam is eight years old. She is pleased she has been chosen to study dance. She is happy to leave her parents and her family home to go and live with her guru, where seven other girls are also learning to dance. What the eight-year-old felt there, at that moment, we can never be sure, but in her retrospective, in her memory, her predominant emotion is one of

contentment. Not of boisterous or ecstatic happiness, necessarily, but of a quietly accepting contentment with the hand life dealt her, and of a profound joy that she was given the opportunity to dance.

In her childhood life, she is taking daily dance classes in *adavus*, in *abhinaya*, and in singing. She is helping her guru's wife with the daily household chores: she is pulling water from the well, she is beating saris clean against a stone, she is spreading a *dhoti*¹ out to dry, she is grinding coconut. She is playing. She flirts with the possibility of disobeying her guru, but whilst his own daughter mischievously pushes the boundaries of her father's authority, Madam cannot bring herself to do so, and is dutiful in every respect. As she reminisces, however, she expresses very clearly the familial feelings generated in her guru's house. He and his wife treated them all as their own children. It is easy for such attachments to arise when dancer's whole lifestyle revolves around their dance guru.

Embedded within this system is the notion of control. The guru demands that the student surrender herself in dedication to the dance, and the student expects that she should do so. In modern contexts, I am interested in the nature of these mutual expectations. What conscious form do they take? Are the rules learnt, or are they already present in the social landscape of the individuals concerned? And how does the inevitable fact of displaced contexts cope with this? My own varied experiences, and listening to and watching the experience of others has directed me to asking these questions. In doing so I also hope to raise awareness in areas of anthropology that deal with understandings of the emotional and experienced self.

modern contexts

How, then, does this traditional system of *gurukulam* relate to modern contexts in which people learn to dance? To find answers to this question I draw on the more numerous and varied voices encountered during fieldwork, my own included. The picture is clearly not as straightforward as that painted by Madam. Before moving on to consider each context more intimately, let me outline the variety of situations in which people nowadays learn to dance. Is it really the case that '[t]he teaching of classical dance in Indian cities today is totally divorced from the dance's roots in the traditional setting of temple worship' (Marglin 1985: 2)? Older dancers such as *odissi* dancer, Sanjukta Panigrahi, who have witnessed both contexts, can reflect on them in relation to dance training. We hear how 'modern life, social changes, work requirements, and compulsory schooling generate a context in which it is

¹ Long strip of cloth tied around men's waist as clothing.

difficult to recreate the master-student relationship that was so essential to [Sanjukta's] own apprenticeship' (Varley 1998: 252). In every respect dance education has become altogether more institutionalised. Both in the UK and in India, *bharatanatyam* is taught in schools or as part of extra-mural activities, where a spectrum of different approaches exists. Invariably, however, one teacher—one guru—emerges as a central figure in any teaching context.

Schools vary enormously. The Sivasakti dance school in Chidambaram runs dance and music classes for village children in the evenings on a relatively ad-hoc and informal basis, and acts as a space for individual tuition of more advanced students at other times in the day. Such students often also attend the Annamalai University on the outskirts of the town where they can study for a degree in performing arts which encompasses *bharatanatyam*. At the opposite end of the scale, Kalakshetra in Chennai exists as the bastion, the founding mother of all schools. Students of varying levels come from all over India and the world to attend Kalakshetra. They live on a huge campus, and daily mundane activities interweave with dance classes in much the same way as Madam described, albeit on a much grander scale.

Activities at Kalakshetra include music, painting and drama, as well as dance in various forms, and students are working towards a three or four year diploma. The school is renowned for its demanding and rigorous discipline. Its founding principle is the notion of *gurukulam*: 'From the beginning Rukmini Devi had intended to develop Kalakshetra along the lines of India's ancient universities where teachers and pupils dwelt together in one community or GURUKULAM' (Kalakshetra literature). In between, there are a range and abundance of schools in Chennai of various sizes and quality. Unwittingly mentioning that you are studying *bharatanatyam* to anyone in Chennai elicits one assertive and probing response—'Who is your guru?'

Studying dance in Edinburgh and in London reveals a slightly different story. In London, as in India, there are schools of varying scale, with the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan as the main UK centre for studying Indian Arts. The syllabus includes *bharatanatyam*, Karnatic and Hindustani vocal music, flute, tabla, vina, violin, mridangam, yoga and kathak, as well as language tuition in Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Sanskrit, Tamil and Malayalam.

The Bhavan operates to the following basic principles: Knowledge and skill are imparted using a 'Learn and Teach' approach which develops performance and theory skills which are then available for teaching others. Pupils are taught the self-discipline necessary to become fine performers, scholars and valuable members of society. The Bhavan represents a culture that is a part of the heritage of the UK. The young and adults are equally welcome (Bhavan literature).

The majority of group classes take place at the weekends. At the lowest level there is an open class taught by senior students, after which students progress on to the three-year diploma course which includes theory of dance and vocal classes. The course is assessed each year by staff from Bhavan and invited teachers from India. Following the three-year diploma is the option of a two-year post-diploma, and following this, some students continue with private classes with Guruji, usually taking place at prearranged times during the week.

I was placed in diploma classes one and two, since my stay was going to be relatively short and my ability difficult to categorise. Both classes were almost exclusively female, with the exception of one or two males in each. They were also dominated by children and teenagers of Indian origin. In one class I was both the oldest, and the only non-Asian student, although there were a few 'mature' students also. In the other there were a number of older students—some white, some Asian—which made me feel slightly less out of place. Guruji treated all students equally.

Aside from Bhavan, there are a number of evening classes around the city. I attended one organised by Akademi and taught by a dancer, Anusha Subramanyam, who completed her own initial training at Kalakshetra. This class took place once a week in a studio at 'The Place', a well-established centre for contemporary dance in London, and was divided into beginners and intermediate classes of an hour each. I normally attended both. Although the class had only recently been established, Anusha quickly developed a regular following. The class was very mixed in terms of race and age, although everyone was over the age of eighteen, and a high proportion were of Asian extraction. In a group of about sixteen, there were four men, which is a reasonable number for any dance evening class.

There was no formal qualification attached to the class, but as I was leaving, Anusha introduced us to a newly formulated bharatanatyam syllabus published by the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing (ISTD), which received her full support. This is intended to provide guidelines for teachers and students in the form of six grades to indicate progress, examined at certain stages, providing bharatanatyam in the UK with something similar to ballet training and exams. I quote at length from the syllabus. It aims:

- (i) To impart practical skills in Bharatanatyam/Kathak as it exists today in its traditional format, complemented by appropriate background knowledge and understanding of the art, through a graded programme of training and assessment.
- (ii) To lay a holistic foundation for young dancers in preparation for vocational training in Bharatanatyam/Kathak or other dance based careers. (A process that

emphasises an integrated development of dance students in the major aspects of the artform such as movement technique performance skill, understanding of music and literature etc. in relation to the life experience of the students in Britain).

(iii) To develop an awareness and appreciation of South Asian dance within the context of a wider dance world.

It outlines that its purpose is:

(i) To provide a guideline for teachers to create a training programme for students of Bharatanatyam and Kathak in Britain.

(ii) To establish a formally recognised system of standardisation and assessment throughout the country.

(iii) To provide a starting point for inspiring further initiatives to facilitate the creation of a new generation of South Asian dance artists in Britain.

Further, in an introduction to the bharatanatyam syllabus it says:

It is...only logical to design this syllabus in close conjunction with the traditional teaching approach, while considering the needs and experiences of the students in the western world. The average South Asian dance student in Britain, it is generally felt, is in an environment which may not necessarily complement his or her experience of Bharatanatyam training. This syllabus, therefore, is based on investing time and effort in the initial grades, to create the necessary physical and intellectual infrastructure for the young learners.

The creation of such new institutions and objectives undoubtedly holds repercussions for the system of gurukulam as an institution in its own right. By acknowledging that the circumstance of a student's environment effects her process of learning dance, the power base of the dance in the guru-student relationship is already subverted, and the possibility of *creating* such an environment limited on a number of levels. With this in mind, it is interesting to consider Anusha's response to the ISTD syllabus in an interview published in the London based Indian dance magazine, ExtrADITION: 'The formal qualifications will help students 'please' parents. This may lead to a greater power of negotiation for the teachers with regards to amount of teaching time required in maintaining the desired quality' (interview with Anusha Subramanyan in Ghosh 1999: 19). In spite of promoting the syllabus, therefore, which potentially takes power away from teachers, she articulates how this can be used to return it to them, and once again displays a preference for traditional ways of learning.

In Edinburgh, bharatanatyam classes were not so long established, with no 'school' to speak of. My teacher, as described in chapter two, was on new territory, both in terms of teaching outside India, and in terms of setting up classes in Edinburgh. I first attended a weekly class on a Saturday morning run by Dance Base, an organisation which runs the majority of dance activities in Edinburgh. It was a beginner's class, and no provision had been made for a more advanced class. My teacher, therefore, took committed students who wished to continue learning to attend various other classes around the city which she effectively ran as she pleased, and used to further student's technique and give them more regular practice. These stopped over the summer, when we as a group would try and procure a space to practice in on a more private and ad-hoc basis.

Dance Base classes were well attended by a range of people, mainly women, substantially non-Asian, and of a variety of ages. Eventually, a 'core group' formed and trained more consistently. Although things shifted slightly over the time I was dancing, this broadly consisted of two main dancers, one male, one female, myself, who started about a year later, and another woman who started later again. We would practise with a number of younger teenage dancers (usually five), the majority of whom were of Asian descent. The one white girl who attended was born and brought up in Gujarat. There was no formal syllabus or examination system.

comparisons

What comparisons can we draw between all these situations? Before, in the following section, dealing with the complexities and subtleties of the relationships involved and evolved in learning to dance, I consider some of the more basic and ideal elements which surface in the variety of learning contexts.

Clearly, Madam's vocation as a dancer was decided for her. Her own personal choice did not play a part, although she was happy to be chosen, and more importantly, happily *accepted* the decision. Acceptance is important to recognise as a dominant emotion in the system and discourse of gurukulam, and lays the foundations for a wider emotional state desirable for the study of dance in general. It echoes the relationship a devotee may have with God:

His duty is to sustain me.
My duty is simply to serve² (cited in Buck 1983: 32).

² Lines taken from a Saiva Siddhanta song.

The choice made for Madam was twofold. Most immediately by her parents and her guru, but also by the very nature of her being a child of a *dasi* family. Children nowadays may similarly have a limited choice initially. Parents decide to send them to dance classes for a number of reasons—perhaps because it is the ‘done thing’, a sign of a good education, an attractive accomplishment, an unfulfilled ambition. Further, it may also be viewed as an important fragment of culture, a centre of community, a sense of identity. But if children do not choose to start, they choose whether and when to stop. They may accept the decision to go to class, but not necessarily willingly, and they may reach a certain level of achievement and stop, giving up dancing in favour of a technical or vocational degree, or when they get married. Often this will be after an *arangetram* performance, or where qualifications exist, after completion of a diploma. For these students, relationships with the dance, and subsequently with dance teachers invariably remain at a very surface level, uncomplicated by their lack of personal attachment to *bharatanatyam*. In turn, teachers have no need to realise a level of commitment beyond that of the student. My focus does not rest primarily with these students.

Others fall in love with the dance after the first lesson. They willingly attend their classes, and continue dancing into adult life—either negotiating it with other studies, or another career, or turning to dance professionally. If this is the case, dancers from the UK will almost certainly go to India for a period of training, often attending Kalakshetra, or schools with similar international reputations.³ The opportunity to learn in India is often talked about by dancers here as some kind of turning point. This has implications which I shall expand on, but for now it is sufficient to say that this often has much to do with access to teaching, and the opportunities for learning which are so much more expansive in the most practical ways, often simply to do with time and space.

Returning to consider the point at which people start dancing, we have one more category to consider. Those adults who take up dance as an evening or weekend activity choose to do so. Often they are just curious. Perhaps they have been to India—even seen or taken a dance class there—and their enthusiasm spills over into their lives back home. They may be dancers of some kind who want to train their bodies in a different discipline. They choose to attend classes for a variety of reasons—‘something different’, good exercise (‘a bit more

³ Students that I talked to had attended schools run by the Dhananjayans, a couple from Kerala with a school in Chennai, and another newly opened in Kerala, and Padma Subramanian, a dancer teacher and academic based in Chennai. She has developed her own particular technique, a distinctive and recognisable style, based on the *karanas* (temple carvings of dance postures), and is an extremely popular performer.

interesting than aerobics'), an inspiring teacher. Or just as those little girls, because they love it after the first class. The decision of how far they want to take it rests with them.

With this framework in mind, the next section discusses some of the complexities involved in the whole process of studying dance in a system of teaching and learning that initially existed in a culturally and socially isolated context, but which has now hugely expanded over time and space. Here, I look more closely at the content of the relationship developed between students and their teachers or gurus.⁴ In order to do this, I take the notions of guru and student, and look at the ways they are separately formulated in the system, before considering the relationship between them.

Two Sides

gurus

Gurukulam is rooted in the nature of knowledge as discussed in the previous chapter. The identity that a guru holds is twofold. On one level the guru is disassociated from their own personhood. They cease to be simply human, and become an abstract entity of the knowledge they represent. Further than this, they become divine. 'Gurus are human, but their persona is divine' (Alter 1992: 66). Standing before her guru, a dancer is thus standing both before the embodied image of the dance, and before god. In this image, the guru is empty of all personality; a vessel for carrying the skill to be passed across generations, having reached the appropriate level to do so. In this way, the role that they fulfil is paramount in shaping their view of themselves, and providing the frame for the way others view them. There is no distinction between the professional and personal self, and as Alter observes of a wrestler's guru, 'what he is supposed to be can transcend what he is' (1992: 58).

⁴ In some ways there is a distinction between the terms 'teacher' and 'guru', although it is often difficult to clearly distinguish. This is partly due to a confusion on the ground—not so much as to whether students call their dance instructor a teacher or a guru, but because I am treating the subject academically. Thus I am interested in the *characteristics* of a relationship which may move between either category. 'Guru' is first used in a pristine way, in which I consider cultural and historical aspects of the system. The term then acquires new meanings as we consider different and more modern contexts, where I begin to interchange it with 'teacher' where appropriate. Otherwise I use the word teacher in a verbal descriptive sense.

But in the execution of this role, the gurus have a second and less abstract persona. They take the role of teacher in its more practical sense. In every day interaction, they set up a relationship with their students which draws on both their knowledge and personality, where ideals may not necessarily be upheld, and where, I suggest, Alter's observation may actually be inverted. In this way, 'what a guru is can transcend what he is supposed to be'. At the conscious heart of a guru's actions is the desire and obligation to instruct a student of bharatanatyam in every aspect of the dance, and to encourage every aspect of the dance to become part of the student's life. The *principle* of their role is the overriding motivation for their actions, which simultaneously disallows them to concede that a personal agenda may also be at work. It is rarely the case that a student would question their teacher, not only because they implicitly trust them to do everything in the interest of the student as dancer, but also because teachers themselves view their actions in the same light. It is a process full of subtleties. Gurus draw on their own experiences, both consciously and unconsciously, and so become an embodiment of every guru before them. In this way, a kind of 'institutionalised personality' emerges.

To talk about the process and definition of gurukulam in terms of a structural institution, however, is to disregard its full meaning. Once again, it is in the experience of the structure that we find true sense. It is the emotional content of the relationship that gives it its form and power, denying it a purely abstract consideration—which is not to say that the abstract *role* of the guru is devoid of experiential meaning. It is, rather, simply to say that our analysis of the situation cannot only exist on one level. The two aspects of the role unite in an emotional whole that is both structural and personal.

As I moved between teachers, I was continually surprised by certain similarities they held. How to pinpoint such things? Similarities were barely visible alongside obvious differences, but existed at the level of phrases used, a certain sense of humour, a form of gentle encouragement, or a level of strictness. Such devices are used to elicit appropriate responses from students towards learning dance, and are generally similar due to the guiding principle that 'the guru serves as an interpreter and exemplar, as commentary and commentator, a self reflective mediator between divine ideals and lived experience' (Alter 1992: 66).

Again we find a series of parallel processes. Teachers are bound to one another by 'the dance' in the broad manner, but are simultaneously bound to the individual gurus who acted as their own teachers. In this way, similarities also emerge in a more tangible way between the latter two. This may be manifest in direct references to their own guru during class, or it may emerge more covertly in the sense of an 'interpersonality' described by Trawick where

‘[h]abits and personality traits [are] transferred laterally, just as they [are] handed down through generations’ (1990: 251). Positive attitudes of dedication or compassion are handed down. Likewise, patterns to do with manipulation of power, for example, are evident, and could very clearly be traced through references in conversation to a teacher’s own experiences with a guru. It is difficult to find a clear line within teaching personalities regarding such things—where one teacher ends and another begins—although it exists, nonetheless. Teachers also find their own voices, and are indeed forced to do so when they are working within new environments.

The complexities at issue here unfolded during my entire fieldwork period. With a developing and cumulative awareness, I began to find patterns in my encounters with teachers, and through conversations with dancers about their own learning and teaching processes. The language used, the quality of gesture, the colour of light in the eye; all revealed the similarities enfolded in the uniqueness of each situation. Stories did not match in a way that I could draw easy conclusions, however, because students did not always articulate the same emotional attitudes towards their teachers. Again and again I found it necessary to re-think situations, and place the differing descriptions and encounters in a structural framework of experience, rather than just see them as similar experiences. In this way the emotional and moral quality in a guru’s method is revealed. Teaching requires dedicated attention to personal and technical exactitude, where the student is implicated in self-discipline, which is perhaps the most powerful tool a guru has at their disposal.

students

Considering further the student’s⁵ place as part gurukulam, we can once again see a double aspect to her role, in a way that makes her both subject and object. As object, she is a projection of her guru. In the public arena, her body may be used artistically and politically to represent her guru in a way that she has very little control over. Through her, the guru becomes the ‘distributed person’, described by Gell (1998: 230) in his discussion of kula operators evoked in chapter one. A student in this sense is the named ‘circulating object’.

I am sitting in the back of a black auto-rickshaw. Outside it is gloomy and raining. My teacher from Edinburgh has come to India, and we are crammed in the tiny back seat on our

⁵ In contrast to my use of ‘teacher’ and ‘guru’, I use the single term ‘student’ rather than ‘disciple’, as the more appropriate term given my experience. Very rarely did I hear people refer to themselves or their students as ‘disciples,’ whilst teacher and guru were both used frequently. ‘Student’ was the most frequently used term, although at times the Sanskrit equivalent *sisya* was referred to, usually in more formal conversations.

way to see the tailor about costumes. I am so happy to be with her again. She is distracted by the way her own guru has turned against her since her return from Scotland, leaving the way open for other dance teachers to 'claim' her. 'You know, you feel just like a commodity here; dancers are treated like commodities,' she says as she describes how other dance teachers, hearing the gossip about her split from her guru, have been phoning to offer her classes. She is dubious and sceptical about their true intentions. Dancers become important symbols of continuing traditions, but more specifically, of a particular tradition handed through their guru. They become singularly identified with this person in a way that only partially leaves them when they themselves leave their teachers. This is authenticated by their bodies, which are inscribed by the hours spent with their teacher. They are also, of course, a valuable source of income.

Once again, it is a role both abstracted and experienced, and a student also importantly retains her human quality and her personality. As individuals, gurukulam demands that students are dedicated and loyal to their guru. 'I don't know if it's to do with Indian tradition, or with dance,' a friend of mine comments, 'but there's always an issue of loyalty.' Thus, in my eagerness to study in India for my 'fieldwork' I unwittingly contravened one of the most fundamental aspects of gurukulam and left my teacher for a period of time, assuming that I could recommence classes on my return. But within traditional notions of gurukulam '[s]tudents who strayed, or took help from other teachers for reasons, however valid, were dropped forthwith. No amount of pleading could make the *nattuvanar* relent and take the errant back to the fold' (Ramnarayan *The Hindu* [folio], December 27th 1998). The guru has the last word. Madam talks of her own teaching experiences. We have just finished a class:

Afterwards, we drink tea and she chats. She talks of family life, of going to Madras, of dance. Of one male student coming from another guru who she began to teach, but he started teaching her instead! Telling her the correct rhythms and so on. So she laid down her ground rules; either he stop teaching her or he leave! He left. We had a good old chuckle about it.

Even *talking* to another guru can threaten a student's position in her own guru's favour. With this fear, a student in London attends extra dance classes with another teacher, but without her guru's knowledge. For this reason, also, during a phone call to me in India, my teacher from Edinburgh is anxious that I do not accept food from my new teachers; eating with them would serve to influence me on a number of levels.

Gurukulam requests that students enter into the relationship wholeheartedly in order to fully receive what it offers. Alter writes:

A wrestling guru is one who instructs his disciples on the fine art of wrestling. He prescribes each wrestler's individual regimen by delineating the number and sequence of exercises, the types and number of moves to be practised, the content and quantity of diet, and the time and amount of rest. A guru is also a source of strength and wisdom, and a wrestler must be willing and able to commit himself totally to his guru in order to gain access to this strength and wisdom (1992: 2).

Because students ratify this, understandings we hold about power and control are problematised. As we look more closely at the way guru and student interact as part of a relationship later in the chapter, we begin to see how this happens, thereby redefining these powerful instances. The quality and emotional content of the experience involved substantiates the system.

Let us consider further how this system functions as one that is actively working in the kinds of instances I encountered. Here, students fall into a number of categories. Those children attending Bhavan, for example, those sent there by their parents, can anticipate it. For a number of reasons they are already familiar with something of the learning environment concerning dance. Not fully, and maybe not consciously, but they are able to formulate some kind of appropriate response. Given the ambience at Bhavan, it is not altogether surprising. Entering Bhavan for the first time I immediately recognised something from India. The way classes appear to be running in a slightly haphazard fashion, but are in fact carefully orchestrated. Shoes from every generation piled in the hallway, the smell of *puri* or *masala dosai*.⁶ Many children are part of this atmosphere before they begin dance classes. They may have watched their older siblings lining up to pay respect to Guruji and to the *tattu-kal* or they have sat in an auditorium observing and learning rhythms during a dance performance. When they begin classes themselves, their mothers are there to tie them into a dance sari with well-practised confidence.

Those students attending Bhavan as adults are in a different position. Usually strangers to Indian culture, they have only a vague idea about *bharatanatyam*, and about what learning it may entail. As they begin to dance, the familiar adage becomes apparent. They realise that it is not only a matter of learning *how* to dance, but also learning how to *be* in a dance class. Having spent time in dance environments, I had a short cut to perceiving how I should conduct myself, although conducting myself according to my former teacher's rules could at

⁶ Along with *iddli*, these are traditional South Indian tiffin (snacks).

times be inhibiting for me. Others had to learn by trial and error and by developing a greater awareness. Lily, for example, told me how she used change at the side of the class (perfectly acceptable in many contemporary dance classes), until she realised it was far too immodest. Or Susan, wearing a sleeveless top under her sari (as she had on previous occasions), turned to me in the changing room with sudden realisation and said 'Is it okay to wear a top like this? It's not really, is it?' I hesitated, 'Hmm, maybe not. It might be better to wear something with a sleeve'. Small things become important symbols to be experienced as a student becomes sincere about learning bharatanatyam.

Given changing situations, is it the case that 'today young people are not willing blindly to accept and respect the master, the guru. The way of teaching changes, and also the obtainable results' (Varley 1998: 254)? Perhaps we must not be too quick to assess initial appearances, even in those situations that appear completely non-traditional such as evening and weekend classes attended predominantly by adults. The terminology used in these is not so obviously that of gurukulam and students enter them initially with the same attitude as they would any other part-time activity. Once they get past a certain stage of involvement, however, patterns emerge which recognisably belong to traditional systems. We see how such systems and ways of behaving within them, whether as teacher or student, pass through generations and retain a presence which is absorbed and transformed through time. We can trace elements of a relationship which does not operate in the way it is traditionally designed to, but which is highly relevant to—and perhaps crucial to—the experience of learning to dance. If this is the case, dancing ceases to exist independently of the system of learning to which it historically belongs, and can only be understood as part of this framework.

Undoubtedly, my emotional self became aware of this long before my mindful self. I understood how I should behave, even though feelings that existed relating to dance situations were often unexpected and unfamiliar. By the time I was conscious of this, they were in place and showed themselves in every subsequent dance situation.

Gurus and Students

Now I move on to describe some of the salient characteristics of gurukulam, and draw the previous two sections together, giving content to the student-guru relationship. I consider the relationship to be one of both structure and feeling; of an ideally structured system which engenders and encompasses emotional content. The two are intimately connected and

identifiable, allowing us to understand emotional processes in greater depth. The implications of this will be more fully explored in the next chapter.

a balance of power

Reflecting on the character of the guru-student relationship, we are faced with a myriad of processes and layers of power, and with their implications for understanding power in this relationship. In our discussion of the nature of power in gurukulam, it is important to keep in mind the reciprocal character of the system. In one way, this is hidden under the obvious power structure weighted in favour of the guru. The student, thirsty for knowledge of the dance, appreciates that her only access to that knowledge is through her guru. She must await her guru's instruction, practise diligently, and prove herself worthy. But a guru needs students. As we have seen, a student is the guru's symbol to themselves, and to the outside world, of their worth and status. Gurus are nothing without students, and are indeed obliged to pass on the knowledge that they possess. It is knowledge that they cannot own. It belongs not to them but to god, and through this, part of them is made god.

Students rarely exploit this power. Respect, loyalty, and in many ways, love, are invariably the foremost sentiments that prevent them doing so. It is only after leaving a guru that a student may express any kind of criticism towards them when on some level she is freed from the constraints that being part of an active relationship places on her. In this instance, if criticism does occur, it is rarely wholehearted and always double-sided. On the one hand, a personal and immediate expression, which may be resentful of the possible controlling or harsh personality of a guru, who disallowed her any personal freedom. On the other, the quick qualification which cancels the criticism, and acknowledges the enormity of the debt she owes her guru. This sentiment is both personal and structural to the system: 'I will always be grateful for what he [the guru] has given me, for introducing me to the dance. Without him, I wouldn't be where I am today'. Love is latent in formulating these qualifications, and active in feelings towards a new guru, to whom the student is once again laid open in her pursuit of knowledge.

How can we place instances of criticism or confusion expressed by dancers, which ostensibly represent an example of *discontinuity*, with the gurukulam ideal? Are these not, indeed, instances of resistance that confirm constraining power structures? Do they represent an integral part of defining and creating structures of power (Foucault 1978; Abu-Lughod 1990)? In a similar vein, Hertzveld (1997) described systems of apprenticeship in Greece, where small instances of disobedience and rebellion against a master are recognised as

integral to successful completion of the apprenticeship. They are an important step in the learning process, endorsed by the system, and by the master, who may witness them, but importantly turns a blind eye. I suggest that analogous instances in gurukulam, which in many ways is usefully comparable to systems of apprenticeship, cannot be looked at in the same way in this respect.

In gurukulam, the dance student herself recognises that criticism has no place, because her own sense of judgement is given over to her guru. Instead, she cultivates a nature of acceptance in order to disempower the ego; a letting go of personality, emotion and body, not because they have no place (they are central to the whole endeavour, as I continually emphasise), but because they must be used in a particular way as to uncover the beauty inherent in the dance. So when she does feel frustrated or critical, she is not rebelling, she is failing. For this reason, there are always two voices. One, the transient voice of frustration or fear or disbelief; the other, the serene and permanently overriding acceptance of the situation in which the other voice is ultimately irrelevant. It is perfectly acceptable that they are both heard, so long as the former remains a surface or transient emotion. The student is, after all, always a child, and always learning. She is allowed shortcomings. It is in this sense that her guru, as parent, defines her (cf. Mahoney and Ynveesson 1992), but in a relationship where power is internalised, and rebellion is expendable rather than integral.⁷

It feels, at times, a helpless position. Issues such as abuse of power, moral control, lack of autonomy are irrelevant. It is not a situation in which the student makes judgements on a positive or negative basis; it is simply that which is done. 'No element of choice enters into that world of imagination and eternity' (Coomaraswamy 1918: 45). Ultimately it is also a process of self-discipline. The guru aims to provide the student with the self-discipline and moral code to engage with the dance at the deepest level, leaving her with the potential to perform with sincerity, and eventually pass on knowledge to others who want to learn. We are not, however, looking at discipline of the body as repressive—'the meticulous control of the operations of the body which assured the constant subjugation of its forces' (Foucault 1977: 137)—or of authority as producing 'conceptual impotence' (Hammoudi 1997: ix). We are trying to understand experience. As the dancer, under the guidance of her guru, heightens awareness of her body, she and her guru are able to exercise greater control over it. With this control comes a greater sense of physical and emotional freedom that goes beyond the

⁷ This particularly refers to conceptions of the relationship, both in ideal terms, and in terms of how students and teachers experience it. In the following chapter, I suggest that there is something integral about the total emotional landscape which the guru-student relationship engenders. This becomes important in the formulation of emotions in the student, which they then bring to their dance.

anticipated embodied self, and allows her a fuller embodiment of beauty. The sublimity of *sringara rasa* is beyond gurukulam. As Kersenboom writes after Balasaraswati:

Bala admits that at first it will be difficult to conform to the demands and discipline of rhythm and melody and to the norms and codes of the tradition. But if a student humbly submits to the greatness of this art, she will soon enough find joy in that discipline; and she will realise that discipline makes her free in the joyful realm of her art (1995: 103).

To this end, gurus are trusted in their choice of behaviour towards the student. The dance student gives herself freely to this process. She is implicated in a relationship where ultimate power lies with no individual, but with the art form. The art form itself is then implicated in the system of gurukulam. And if the guru's task is ultimately to encourage self-discipline, the system is closed; not in a way that is constraining or finite, but in a way that encompasses a sense of being-in-the-world as complete, yet ever-open to greater perfection in the form of increased awareness and sensibility. The dancer trusts her art form also, whilst paradoxically using the imaginative process to create her experience of it (see chapter two). We are necessarily directed to understanding power phenomenologically conceived by individuals as lending it meaning. I am arguing that where power is ultimately and morally directed towards a potentially constraining self-discipline, the experience *of* power is not entirely conceived as such. The unconscious fully embodied self of Bourdieu (1977) has both agency and discipline, and we must look to the emotions to understand it. Tempted as we are to see the system as constraining, we must not, because in doing so, we deny it meaning.

Looking to the emotions thus, however, does not make my argument complete. It is too ideal. Although gurus benevolently accept a student expressing her own emotions through the learning process, they cannot necessarily control them. In situations where students permanently and deeply *question*, rather than *accept*, lies the true rebellion. It surely disallows my argument that discipline is part of a self-perpetuating system which the student ultimately experiences as empowering. Power does indeed relate to knowledge (Foucault 1977), but as we have seen, knowledge is not singular. It becomes open to question. As knowledge systems overlap, students and gurus juggle with different notions of power which are incompatible at times and which compromise gurukulam ideals. Gurus may remain performers alongside their role as teachers, which confuses their position of authority (Ramnarayan *The Hindu* [folio], December 27th 1998). They are no longer truly dedicated to their role as teachers, still devoting their energies to performing knowledge rather than giving it to others to perform. Students likewise inhabit two bodies of knowledge that potentially leaves them lacking the emotional resources to fully encompass either.

In our analysis we must accept that the experience of power is also problematised, not with regard to the structural processes outlined above, which resolve power by converting it to self-discipline and freedom, but with regard to the experience of competing knowledge ideals. Resistance is in a position of exteriority in relation to power,⁸ and we must therefore appropriately locate differing sources of tension. Imagining the relationship once again becomes the powerful resource with which to resolve experience, not by eliminating tension, but rationalising it in terms of differing bodies of knowledge. Tension is located in a personal relationship with a guru, or in terms of a practical situation, displaced by an appeal to dance in its abstract form, and dissipated. This moment, if only fleetingly, is where, hopefully, beauty is possible, and is the place where dancers retreat to resolve doubt. With grace and rhythmic energy, the act of dancing restores and resolves negative feelings which the act of learning may engender—doubt, fear, anger, frustration—both by absorbing them into the dance genre, and by temporarily removing the dancer from the world.

a gift

Because of the reciprocal nature of gurukulam, it is interesting to consider literature relating to gift and exchange, to give us a tangible sense of the way in which the relationship develops in terms of reciprocity. '[A]cts of exchange do not simply imply the return of a specific gift. They anticipate the configuration of experience, and of social action' (Maschio 1998: 85). Does gurukulam imply, in fact, a relationship that is 'apparently free and disinterested but nevertheless constrained and self-interested' (Mauss [1950] 1990: 3)? Are students misnamed as commodities, and rather fit the category of gift with a variety of recipients? Or is there no reciprocal obligation, as in Parry's 'Indian gift' (1986)?

Most importantly, we need to 'make sense' of these questions. We need to ask how the two parties *feel* in this exchange. Emotional investment counts as much as status or politics in our analysis, and these two categories, as we have seen, are emotionally charged themselves. Looked at in this way, the most informative way to understand the earlier statement 'I feel like a commodity,' is to emphasise the *feeling* like a commodity. Here, the dancer is sensing herself as objectified. She is expressing a lack of emotional attachment and compassion from her guru where she clearly believes it should, and does, exist. The currency is not that of money and markets, but of bodies and beauty. Talking of ceremonies surrounding gift-

⁸ This is a response to Abu-Lughod (1990) who frames her argument around Foucault's assertion in *The History of Sexuality* that 'Where there is power there is resistance and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power' (1978:95-96 cited in 1990: 314).

giving, Maschio says: 'It is through such forms of expressive culture that objects become meaningful, that they become, like people, embodiments of memory and conveyers of power of various sorts' (1998: 87). Because she is human, the dancer is both the object and the act surrounding the object in a process of total embodiment. My teacher is thus acknowledging not so much that she is a commodity in its truest sense, but rather a sign to the outside world that she 'belongs' to one person—her guru. The value of such belonging is multifaceted, and rarely disinterested.

Illustrating the complexities of these issues, and connecting them with those of power and authority discussed above, is an article in *The Hindu* outlining the nature of traditional gurus (nattuvanars) with their modern counterparts:

Since the nattuvanars did not perform on stage, they could focus all their energies on the student. There was no competitiveness, or the fear of the student overtaking the master. With the old guard, there was no package deal for quick consumption. Though he could be extremely stingy and mean at times, the nattuvanar could also share generously with the worthy pupil. His success depended on hers. Their relationship was unique (Ramnarayan *The Hindu* [folio], December 27th 1998).

Given that the nature of the dancer's relationship to her historical heritage has been discussed in the previous chapter, here we can see that, as I have described, aspects of the ideal relationship between guru and student are still played out. The contexts in which this happens, however, have altered, which pulls at the basis for the relationship itself.

Money also fits into the equation. Initially, in Edinburgh, I attended one class a week which I paid for through the organising body. When I became more obviously serious, the arrangement became less formal. A tacit agreement happened. Students such as myself did not officially pay for the classes run on a more private basis, unless it was to contribute to the cost of a room. My teacher gave freely of her time, but there was undoubtedly a return. We knew we were expected to work hard. We did not complain if she came very late to a pre-arranged class, or if she left early, or if she did not come at all. We taught or supervised classes to younger or less advanced students at her request. We performed free of charge and often at very short notice. We did it willingly.

In India, I was clearly instructed by the priest as to payment for Madam. My initial payment was in the form of an offering, identical to offerings made to deities in the temple. At a chosen auspicious day and time, money was given on a silver tray alongside bananas and betel, and an additional gift of a lotus which I chose for her of my own volition. Thereafter, I

paid her for each 'item' she taught me. A final 'traditional' payment was made when I left, one that is made when a student leaves any guru, or at times such as an *arangetram* to acknowledge their gift of knowledge. Students will often want to pay large sums to a guru as an expression of thanks and an affirmation of value.

Because the priest spent some of the year in Europe, he asked to be paid on 'western' terms in a 'western' manner. We calculated hours and dollars, and eventually came up with a figure that seemed reasonable to us both. Always slightly miffed I did not seriously consider him my guru, however, he assumed that role at times, and it soon became clear that the relationship entered into with the payment was not without interest, albeit hidden under a certain 'vagueness of the obligation to reciprocate' (Sahlins 1972: 194). I was expected to give of my time and friendship, to provide contacts, and to help out financially when money for his family was low, or there was a special occasion to be paid for, although never in the straightforward way in which we negotiated the initial payment. As with my teacher in Edinburgh, the material side of the transaction was undoubtedly repressed by the social, and the 'expectation of reciprocity indefinite' (op. cit.).

In London, payment for both classes was official. The Bhavan has an office that is run separately from classes, and money is collected according to an official rate. Classes don't come cheap, and students paying for themselves (as opposed to by their parents) often complained behind the scenes that the school was 'just out to make money'. Those students who have passed their diploma, however, enter into a direct relationship with Guruji, and would pay him for private classes. This relationship, again, seems to have some element of fluidity, especially when a big performance is being prepared for. Again, at a certain stage of their learning, students were expected to perform voluntarily at small 'cultural events' if requested. Students paid for the Akademi class according to a prearranged system, and payment went directly to the teacher. Classes were either one or two hours, and paid for individually or in blocks of four. Extras such as books or tapes were charged accordingly.

It is clear that where teachers set up relationships of teaching and learning based more closely on a gurukulam system, a network of often unspoken obligations is being set up also. Gaston says '[t]he financial side can be straightforward or left to the student's family's generosity' (1996: 226). She goes on to cite a dancer talking about her payment with regard to her *arangetram*: 'In 1975 my *arangetram* cost about nine thousand rupees. My teacher didn't demand, we just gave it to her. She was not a very avaricious person' (op. cit.). We then hear another teacher talking: 'They give what they can, I don't demand more as it is my job to teach and then at the end to conduct their *arangetram*. I shouldn't ask for a present as

I have so many things...It is wrong to ask for guru *dakshina* [honorarium]. Some teachers even ask for a television' (ibid.: 227). Teachers may not want to *obviously* take payment. Their sense of obligation is to generously impart their knowledge. A friend once told me that her teacher had started teaching because she 'wanted to stop dancing,' and did not feel she could do so until she had passed on this knowledge in her possession.

In this system, knowledge has no boundaries. All my teachers told stories of how their own gurus would make students stay and practise until they had completed or perfected what their guru wanted them to do. This custom extends beyond classes, entering the performance arena, where audiences become students to some extent. Timing of concerts is often an altogether lackadaisical matter. Audiences are left waiting for a concert to begin and intervals are consistently lengthier than the prescribed fifteen minutes if the venue is informal enough to allow it. Equally, performances, especially musical events, may extend well beyond the expected programme. The sense we can draw from this relates back to teaching situations which defy time boundaries in order to complete a task and bring the class to an appropriate conclusion. Both dancers and audiences are expected to accept this, indeed, ideally, to not even be aware of it.

If not aware in the moments of dancing, a student *is* aware (and made aware) of this through stories related by their teachers.

To the nattuvanars of the old school, teaching was not a time bound process. They could and did take class for hours until the student begged for a break. Some of them were money-minded, but they were strangers to the business acumen of the modern world (Ramnarayan *The Hindu* [folio], December 27th 1998).

She stores up such stories, and imagines that she and her teachers will continue this pattern. Teachers decide how long or short a class should be. They decide whether to attend, whether to leave early, whether to walk out, whether to remain teaching for an extra hour. Students accept. They are kept guessing, and trust it is part of the learning process. They pay not simply with money, and thereby the relationship is more binding. The investment is one of emotion and action. It is not that teachers do not expect payment. They do. It is just left to the student's discretion concerning when and how much.

These kind of relationships clearly echo the traditional foundations of gurukulam:

The majority of *isai vellala* [hereditary dancers and musicians] reported paying for their training by working for their teacher. They describe this

barter system as performing service (*seva*) for their master. The actual tasks and duties were not fixed but included such things as: shopping in the market for vegetables and other daily requirements, running errands, escorting the teacher's children to school, washing clothes, chopping vegetables and other tasks associated with preparing food, sweeping, looking after the cows and massaging the teacher (Gaston 1996: 121).

These kinds of exchanges and expectations of my first two encounters, as suggested earlier, are in part relationships of 'generalised reciprocity' (Sahlins 1972) appropriate to the familial relationship implied by gurukulam. Whilst being a positive and effective exchange, '[t]he *seva* method of payment, however, was often open to abuse' (Gaston 1996: 122). Regulating the fairness, not to mention the emotional and practical burden, of such an undetermined system starkly emphasises the precarious power balance of the relationship.

Such a system is difficult to uphold in displaced or institutionalised environments. Student commitment may be sporadic and dependent on outside circumstances. Importantly, students may not realise that payment must take place in this more covert manner and as a result, teachers may suffer financially. Students also unwittingly implicate themselves in not being appropriately grateful for the gift of knowledge they receive, which may indirectly affect the teaching relationship. Things are often forced to become more structured to avoid misunderstanding.

Our example of this is the Akademi class, which has fully evolved and structured system of payment. In these types of classes, knowledge and practise *is* measured in hours. People pay for a certain time and expect certain standards. They expect a particular teacher to be there for a particular time (particular circumstances excepted), and attend to their learning process throughout. If students miss a class, they don't pay, and that's where the story ends. In reality, however, it ends there only with difficulty. Talking to the teacher, Anusha, she was already frustrated that the classes were so short and so infrequent (once a week). 'It is so difficult to treat dance like a hobby. We need so much more time—if only because it is so physically challenging.' In the class, she hopefully asks people why they are dancing and is openly disappointed when they reply that it is indeed as a hobby. She tries to explain how difficult it is to treat it like that, how rewarding it would be otherwise, how it can be a hobby if you take it seriously. Her dynamism and charisma is convincing. People are wavering.

Finally, let us take Bhavan, which represents something of a combination between the two systems. The majority pay for classes in the very straightforward way as outlined, but the return they get is often one based on gurukulam. This works up to a point, but in many ways the two do not sit easily together. Older students and more senior classes, especially those

paying for themselves, complain they do not get enough of Guruji's attention. It is often the case that students are left to practise alone as a class for some time, or under the guidance of another student. Every so often this leads to grumblings in the changing rooms which may be framed in terms of money paid for classes. It even caused one (mature) student, to leave. Once again we can relate this to notions of reciprocity, and expectations of the value of things given and received which becomes misunderstood.

The pattern that emerges through all this, then, is not simply one of reciprocity. There are two principles at work. On the one hand, students and teachers give and receive between each other according to laws of understanding which are often unarticulated. Yet knowledge of the dance which is given by the teacher or guru clearly is not returned in a straightforward manner. Nor is it owned. This knowledge must keep moving. Given that dancers are eventually obliged to pass on their knowledge, we find ourselves also involved with processes of 'generalised exchange' (Sahlins 1972). And even if a dancer does not teach, she conveys her knowledge in performance, where audiences become receptors of sensory and emotional experience.

a relationship

Subtext pervades the system of gurukulam, and the relationships that ensue. Much of the dynamic lies in that which goes unsaid. Indeed, as illustrated in chapter two, secrecy may be an important component in ensuring a truly dynamic relationship (cf. Trawick 1990) where 'hiding encourages further seeking' (ibid.: 256). A dance student quickly acquires a highly developed sense of intuition in matters relating to her guru and is often relatively passive in the relationship, as described by Chandra:

already it was clear that Sorkar [the guru] revealed only as much as he wanted to. Rewarded knowledge according to some secret reckoning, let one through his many-layered, soft defences to his innermost thoughts only after a mysterious judgement quite beyond flattery or influence (1995: 318).

Gurus almost always have a choice and a motive for their actions, however small, however subtle. This could be as insignificant as asking a student what she had for breakfast (implying either that they're not dancing well and lacking energy, or curious as to whether they're eating the correct food), or it could be a case of ignoring a student throughout the class, or 'forgetting' their name when they come to explain a lack of attendance. Eventually students learn certain signs, and learn to read the subtext.

Favourite stories of gurus teaching in modern contexts in the UK emphasise the harshness of their own training in comparison to the 'soft-option' we have. This may relate to the time taken to perfect jatis or dance sequences, as Sanjukta Panigrahi describes in her experience at four years old: 'Each exercise had to be done one hundred times; if you stopped before the end, you had to start again from the beginning' (in Varley 1998: 254). Or more often than not it takes the form of descriptions alluding to the way dance masters would throw the sticks at students, or hit them, if they were doing something incorrectly. These latter stories are often accompanied with a sense of humour: 'If the same things happened here nowadays, we'd be had up for child abuse!' But all the same, they reveal a level of violence—including symbolic violence (cf. Hammoudi 1997: viii)—that can exist in the hierarchy of the gurukulam system. Gurus are perfectly placed to abuse their power and, traditionally, parents may be party to this by appreciating that a guru's position in a dance class is tantamount to their own. Alternatively, I have heard stories of young students in a London class, playing on their awareness that their teacher does not hold ultimate authority. In exactly the same and equally humorous way, they appeal to outside regulations of power: 'Anyway, you can't do that because you'd be done for child abuse!' In less open and light-hearted circumstances, however, the student remains mute in situations of abuse that may imply emotional or sexual manipulation.

As suggested in the previous chapter, students often appreciate strictness. It gives a sense of the perfection required in *bharatanatyam* and attaches them to an imagined tradition of 'correct' ways of learning the dance. Because of the enormous respect which students feel for the dance, they do not want praise where it is not due, and it is rarely due in the eyes of a dancer who appreciates the real quality of her art. Students often look to India for such rigorous training and evoke experiences there. As Manisha talks of her year training with the Dhananjayans in Chennai, a quiet vitality enters her face and animates her gesture. 'Going to India was—how can I explain?—like a key for me. Opened me up to the possibilities of *bharatanatyam* in a way I never thought possible. Over there it's different. Not like here where teachers say 'very good' for the smallest thing. My master never praised us. Just hard work and dedication.'

Equally, Guruji was less giving with his praise as students became more senior and more dedicated. Sangeeta spoke with a smile of how he hardly said a word to her after her performance. Certainly no praise, although he did say she shouldn't be so nervous next time because it showed on her face. It was the first time she had performed in three years following injury. She had been training intensively for months—even staying at Guruji's house for some of that time—but I was not surprised. My own experience of performing in

Edinburgh was similar. In fact, a performance with mistakes would more readily elicit praise, undoubtedly relating to our sense of ego as more important than the dance technique. Since we were at a very early stage in our dance, knocking our egos on the head through making mistakes was probably paramount in making us perform in the first place. Our teacher encouraged us to perform at any occasion, big or small, as part of our learning experience. It was looked upon favourably if we agreed to performances without question, and if we did so in good humour and with little pride.

The myth of India being better for studying the dance is a complicated one. My first teacher often pronounced the opposite to be true. With dance, especially bharatanatyam, being so highly politicised there, she felt some element of purity or focus was lost there. For her, teaching dance here was preferable because attention could be more clearly given to 'the dance' in its pristine sense. Along the same lines, Varley writes:

On several occasions Sanjukta has said she misses the intensity of dedication with the non-Asian students she has met...these students follow her only for a few days, but with body and soul. Sanjukta is saddened by the fact that in India young people are not willing to make the necessary sacrifices in order to become artists (1998: 254).

Invariably in bharatanatyam classes, each student is treated individually, even though she may be taught as part of a class. The teacher or guru assesses her personality and physical capability and treats her accordingly. Each student is pushed in directions which may be different from her classmates. This sets up relationships between students which are somewhat ambiguous. On the one hand, relationships between two students with the same guru are extremely close and their experiences absolutely shared. Students of differing skills or standards may instruct one another in technique and lend support through the learning process. At the same time, however, I contend that this does not result in group solidarity, which makes no sense in the face of a learning process in which members of the group are treated separately. This, perhaps, relates in turn to a system in which Barth suggests knowledge is highly individualized (1990: 644). A student matures in her dancing only by self-sufficiently generating a singular relationship with her guru. In this respect, it is simultaneously a lonely process.

Gurus tend to assert their knowledge of a student's personality and emotional characteristics in a way that a student can do nothing but assent to. In other words, gurus possess the power to know students better than students know themselves. This is often expressed using the dance. The dance reveals to the guru the true nature of any student, and accordingly, a

student's mood on any day will affect her dancing.⁹ Practising intensively for her performance at Bhavan, Sangeeta told me that Guruji always said he knew immediately how she was going to dance that day as soon as she walked in the door. Similarly, I remained mute on many occasions as teachers lectured me on what I was like, both physically and personally, where my own image of myself didn't agree. Subsequently, a student's self-image is called into question. By means of comparison, consider Hammoudi's description of a Sufi initiate apprehending his master which embraces the emotional nature of this experience: 'The novice was distraught by the influence of his master's gaze on his soul and body; he was overcome by a new energy of a self-alienating nature' (1997: 87).

Traditionally, a great deal of learning in gurukulam is from other students, especially in the early stages—either formally or informally, by watching and copying. If teachers can't attend for some reason, or if they leave the room for a while, they expect senior students to take all or part of classes. They do so purposefully, either in order to give students confidence and practise with teaching, or because they want to focus on teaching other classes. I also expect that doing so, implies a wish to test students' level of acceptance and lack of ego by presenting them with a teacher who, although under the auspices of their guru, is not their guru.

In his discussion of Islamic education, Eickelman (1978) argues that the importance of peer learning has been overlooked because of its relative informality. Because we are dealing with clear stages of learning and acquisition of knowledge where age bears no relevance, peer learning is an important device. It is also one which remains relatively unused if students are unaware of its value, or are too focused on their teacher as bearer of all knowledge, or attend classes which are formally paid for by the hour. It is a subtle divide for students unfamiliar with the system. On the one hand, to accept their 'guru' as all-knowing, whilst on the other, to accept more senior students as teachers also. Ultimately, it is an exercise in humility.

Further, student's are expected to learn from watching others dance in performance. Before going to India, I had very little opportunity to attend bharatanatyam performances. My experiences of performance came from stories related by my teacher, and from the small performances we would give as a group in and around Edinburgh and Glasgow. In India, I had the wonderful opportunity to see dance shows in a number of different environments,

⁹ This characteristic is by no means restricted to dance, or to gurukulam. It is a skill imputed to experienced teachers of many kinds. In 'bodily arts', both the body, and the body in the art, reveals to their teacher multiple layers of a student's personality, skill, and daily aptitude—boxing (Wacquant 1998) or fencing (Pérez-Reverte 2000) for example.

contributing to my own process of learning dance. Later, in London, the teacher at Bhavan stressed the importance of watching others dance as part of the learning process. 'Fifty per cent of learning comes from watching performance. Watch how she does the adavus, watch the presentation, how you must present yourself on stage, watch the expressions.' Suddenly it falls into place why my first teacher would sit us in front of videos of dancers for hours on end, flicking from one dancer to another with exclamations and comments. 'Ooh. She's a beautiful dancer.' Or 'Watch this. It's not a good recording, but at least you will see.' All teachers appreciate the value of seeing other dancers, and where such opportunities to see live performances are limited, TV and video play an important part. Many of these learning devices, however, remain unarticulated, where learning how to learn is in the hands of the students until their teacher, if necessary, chooses to prompt them.

How applicable can these characteristics which govern the system of gurukulam be in situations so far removed from their pristine context, where gurus are often perceived simply as teachers, and where classes are bounded units in both space and time rather than a daily and continual process of interaction? As a good example for exploring this, I focus on the preliminary gesture for starting and ending a class. Without exception, any student of bharatanatyam is first taught the namaskar. Namaskar varies slightly according to each teacher, but the pattern is broadly very similar. It is an initial prayer to bring the dancer into the dance and into a space to dance. She asks mother earth's blessing and joins her inner spirit with that of the space and with the (possibly imaginary) audience, and thus prepares herself to begin dancing. Variations as to the conduct of this are apparent. With Madam, and with Guruji at Bhavan, students file up and perform the same gestures to the tattukal and the teacher. Bending, touching the hands to the tattukal, to the teacher and to the eyes. It is a gesture of humility, where the authority of the teacher as guru is acknowledged and felt in the movement. At Bhavan, a closing prayer is also chanted in Sanskrit.

Let us compare this with the other two classes. The Akademi class starts with namaskar also, but it is simply performed in the middle of the room, and students are not encouraged to pay respects in the same way to Anusha as the teacher. She herself says the prayer at the end, and eventually students are expected to memorise and recite this. In many ways we can interpret this as a clearer acknowledgement of the dance over the teacher; a separation made between dance and teacher. The situation in Edinburgh classes is more confused and representative of the dilemmas that take place when teachers have to formulate themselves in new contexts. In initial classes, we performed namaskar both in the centre of the room and to 'the sticks' (as the tattukal was called), which were placed in front of the teacher. Eventually, filing up to the sticks seemed to fizzle out, as if it became of less importance; a

disposable ritual. It was then reintroduced during and following a visit from India by my teacher's guru, which seems to indicate a confusion of roles and of authority.

Analysing my fieldwork experiences overall, I identify aspects of gurukulam that are still very much in place in situations which cosmetically may deny them, but to varying degrees. Relationships on this basis may have their seeds in every day classes, but are often only realised when a student becomes serious about their dance. Classes such as those at Bhavan, or at schools in India, openly run according to some kind of gurukulam philosophy, but I suggest that those classes run in more western contexts also invariably show these values at a very early stage. This undoubtedly has its roots in the way that dance teachers were themselves taught. The majority of teachers have learnt *bharatanatyam* in a very clearly 'Indian' context—whether throughout their dance career, or for certain periods of time. They cannot distance themselves entirely from this even though they may outwardly adopt radically different teaching techniques to deal with the varying situations in which they find themselves. The tiniest uses of language, or action give away the close relationship which the system has to the dance itself.

Things that are somatically based are some of the clearest to identify. Removal of shoes as students enter the dance space is enforced straight away. Invariably in the first class, teachers request that female students tie their hair back, and remain scrupulous about enforcing it from then on. Eventually they influence clothing. This may be tying a cloth round to cover the chest, or wearing a dance (short) sari. All students at Bhavan wear a white dance sari 'uniform' with a red and gold border. As described earlier, students quickly exert self-discipline over their clothing.

The corridors of 'The Place', are filled with appropriately sweaty students, stretching and contorting as they converse. Momentarily relieved that I no longer study contemporary dance, I hurry past and enter the Akademi class for the first time. Everyone is dressed in jogging bottoms or leggings, and T-shirts, and I feel slightly self-conscious in my baggy cotton pyjama, sari blouse and cloth tied round my waist. Six weeks later I enter the same class to find it awash with red and orange cloth trailing from various bodies as they wind themselves into dance saris brought back from India by Anusha. The male members of the group pleat and tuck their legs into white dhotis, bordered with green or red. I admiringly touch the fabric of one sari (such beautiful colours) and ask my classmate how she likes it. 'Well, I feel a bit more the part now, don't I?' And feeling the part, as I argue, is crucial to feeling the dance.

Aside from dance technique and clothing, a teacher always disciplines the internal body. It is frowned upon, for example, to drink water during a class, and is either disallowed, reserved for formal short breaks, or grudgingly acceded with strict instructions to ‘take only small sips.’ On one level, and articulated by my first dance teacher, this is to discipline the body to go without water when it needs to—during a performance, for instance, and to stop the student feeling sick having taken huge gulps of water just prior to dancing. Anusha explained it thus: ‘think of it as a spiritual exercise. It’s like doing *tapas*. You know what *tapas* are? Austerities. In Indian myth, the rishis—spiritual men—would go into the forest to meditate etcetera, and this is the same. Except it’s an ‘urban jungle’ if you like, and we must do *tapas* to control and develop an awareness of ourselves within it.’ It is undoubtedly for both reasons. It illustrates how even the smallest things have wider ramifications, and how the guru’s multi-layered reasoning may often go unexplained—although never unexperienced.

Essential to our understanding of this relationship is to make comparisons with relationships outside it, which I give detailed analysis of in the following chapter. A guru is many things. Whether male or female, the language and attitudes which students use towards dance teachers is invariably similar; in it we can see a child to her mother or father, a girl to her best friend, a woman to her lover or husband. Drawing on a complete emotional repertoire, it is an essential palette for the formation of experience. Further, the relationship is placed in the wider sphere of relationships concerning deities. In the divine aspect the guru is the powerful and distant Lord Siva, the generous and playful Ganesha and the gentle and benevolent devi; it is a natural extension to formulate a relationship with them that is both distant and familial where no juncture exists between the two. It is a relationship of utter exposure.

‘The Dance’

To conclude this chapter, we have one more relationship to consider. Within the system of gurukulam, there is always a third party. As I reflect, the importance of ‘the dance’ as a separate entity emerges. Not ‘the dance’ as the abstracted side of the guru, or as an art form, but ‘the dance’ as an element in its own right. Kersenboom articulates a similar idea in terms of dance compositions, relating her own experience of learning a *varnam*, and returning to dance it again in front of her teacher after spending a couple of years at home in Europe:

She [the teacher] was not pleased: several mistakes had crept in distorting the entire picture. Just like a child I burst out crying: “but I danced it already there and there [sic] like this. I have spoiled the *varnam*!”. At this she became even more annoyed: “No one can spoil the *varnam*, it is just there, on its own. It is we who have to live up to it, that’s all (Kersenboom 1995: 106 fn. 3).

‘The dance’ transcends boundaries, and it is this transcendent belief in ‘the dance’ which mediates the relationship a student has with her gurus. It allows her to remain steadfast in any given situation where the trust she has in her teacher may be called into question. Likewise, when she feels compromised by situations that she is forced into as a result of living and working in modern environments. ‘The dance’ emerges in the dancer’s world as a separate personified force. Decisions are made or justified on an emotional and theoretical level in terms of the dance, which allows a student to develop a particular relationship with dancing, and the place it takes in her life.

Godalming, Surrey. A small Home Counties town with a Waitrose supermarket, and a main street flanked with Tudor buildings. Manisha has just completed a short ‘Indian dance’ lecture- demonstration for children at the local church as part of ‘round the world day’. As part of it, she speaks (vocalises) the meaning of the abhinaya as she dances a story about the birth of Ganesha. Afterwards, we are talking about this and she says she’s unsure about doing it because it’s not really ‘true to the dance,’ implying that the dance would have an opinion. In some ways she feels uncomfortable because it’s not a part of the traditional dance repertoire, but her own sincerity appeals to the compassionate and forgiving side of the dance’s character. ‘I know it’s a bit different, but I always do it with respect for the dance.’

Because people are dealing with such new situations, they have to be continually creative with their dance in ways that may be unprecedented. They must act, and justify such actions, according to their own rulebook. My situation encouraged this attitude in me. Naïve in the whole etiquette of bharatanatyam, I took an unconventional path. I realised none of the things I talk about above. I didn’t understand the concept of surrender to a teacher as representing the dance, and so chose to pursue my dancing alongside a PhD, which would take me away from my first teacher, and in many respects, distance me from my dancing in ways I could not have foreseen. Every choice I made, however, I made through commitment to ‘the dance’, in the belief that this was my way of showing dedication to my chosen art. It is my justification for the mistakes I made through ignorance of a system of teaching and learning—of gurukulam in its modern day guise—which is, in fact, the foundation on which

the dance stands, and which is why I place it as a pivotal point in this work. Submerged in it, 'the dance' acts as a baseline that can confirm a genuine sincerity for each individual.

Chapter 4

Padam: Constituting Emotion

And they said then, 'But play, you must,

A tune beyond us, yet ourselves,

From '*The Man with the Blue Guitar (I)*', Wallace Stevens

The padam is a dance that focuses on the nritya and natya aspects of bharatanatyam. It is a poem set to music, which draws substantially on a dancer's skill in abhinaya. The lyrical aspect of dance is emphasised. It is an expression of emotion, and especially of srīngara rasa, leading to the ultimate emotion of divine bliss. At this point in the programme, absorbed in the dance, the dancer is able to immerse herself in the emotional content. In this chapter, issues regarding the emotional content of my work referred to in passing are here elucidated more fully. Absorbed in ideas from previous chapters—relating to art and the aesthetic, knowledge, and the teaching and learning process—I consider how they contribute to our understanding of the formation and experience of emotion. Out of this we can uncover the relationship which develops between aesthetic and 'collective' emotion in the dance, and the 'personal' or 'individual' emotion of the dancer. First, I briefly outline some of the salient theoretical issues concerning emotion in bharatanatyam, and use them to draw out themes that they evoke in anthropological reflections on emotion.

Approaching Emotion

emotional baselines

A bharatanatyam dancer formulates a view of emotion within the dance context through her training and experience. In order to awaken our sensibilities to emotion in this way, I shall use it as an analytical baseline, around which clusters anthropological treatment of the same subject. If 'it is the Western analysis of the emotions that has produced its own vocabulary of the emotions' (Obeyesekere 1990: 276), I try to allay this tendency by framing them in

both 'western' and 'Indian' terms, where the latter are expressed in 'western vocabulary' to a large extent. Appropriately, this also echoes the mixed contexts I am dealing with.

The *Natyasastra* gives immensely detailed description of the emotions. Emotions are 'hypercognized' (Levy 1984) in the very broadest sense; given that dance is performed expression, they are 'the objects of considerable attention and knowledge' (Ochs 1986: 254 cited in Brenneis 1990: 120). Emotions are articulated in terms of *bhava*, (expression), and *rasa*, understood both as aesthetic emotional experience, and as juice, flavour or essence. 'India finds emotions, like food, necessary for a reasonable life, and, like taste, cultivatable for the fullest understanding of life's meaning and purpose' (Lynch 1990: 23). We are looking at a theory which suggests that different levels of emotional experience are identifiably possible, sensually defined, and which can culminate in one emotional experience of divine bliss.

The dancer shapes emotion at different levels. In a similar way to Rosaldo's (1980) 'felt ideas' or 'embodied thoughts', Marglin defines the process using the term 'body-emotions-thoughts' (1990: 221). She explains it thus:

In a natural speech situation a totality is formed of the body postures, hand gestures, and facial expressions accompanying utterances and modulating, as well as heightening, their cognitive and emotional content. This total communicative-cum-expressive behaviour cannot be neatly divided into physical, emotional, and cognitive aspects; hence, I use the cumbersome compound to convey this totality (op. cit.).

Using 'processes of self' is a possible, less dichotomised, alternative. The dancer is involved in enabling herself, through years of dedicated training, to communicate emotions through a codified aesthetic.

There are eight pure emotions (*sthayi bhavas*), and thirty-three transitory emotions (*vyabhicari* or *sancari bhavas*) which move between these. In the *Natyasastra*, the eight *sthayi bhavas* are recognised as *Sringara*, *Hasya*, *Karuna*, *Raudra*, *Vira*, *Bhayanaka*, *Bibhata* and *Adbhuta*, these being, love, humour, compassion, horror, heroism, fear, repulsion and wonder.¹ In addition, a ninth emotion is often cited as peace or tranquillity (*Santam*). People expressed differing opinions about this. On occasion I was told that the ninth emotion exists,

¹ There are very slight variations of these (see e.g. Coomaraswamy 1936; Padmanabhan Tampy 1963; Daumal [1972] 1982; Lynch 1990; Marglin 1990; Kersenboom 1995; Gaston 1996). Some automatically include the ninth emotion, others make no mention of it. The text I have used here is the *Natyasastra*, 1996 trans. by Adya Rangacharya (pg. 54).

but is the state of utter meditation, only achievable by Lord Siva himself and unavailable to human beings in this life. Alternatively, Sarabhai explains:

[a]ccording to Bharata there are eight rasas and this was accepted till Udbhata, the first commentator on the *Natya Shastra* began to speak of *rasas* as nine in number ...Nandikeshvara mentions Shanta (peaceful) as the ninth *rasa* and today dancers accept nine *rasas*, which are known as *Nava Rasas* (1996: 39).

Dancers undoubtedly represent the ninth *rasa* in dance items.

The transitory emotions are named as dejection, lassitude, suspicion, jealousy, infatuation, fatigue, laziness, helplessness, anxiety, confusion, remembrance, boldness, bashfulness, fickleness, pleasure, excitement, heaviness, pride, sorrow, impatience, sleep, forgetfulness, dream, awakening, intolerance, dissimulation, ferocity, desire, disease, insanity, death, fear and guessing. Further, there are indications of feeling showed through eight physical actions (*sattvika bhavas* or *anubhavas*). These assist in registering the emotion portrayed and are: feeling stunned, sweating, thrill, break in voice, trembling, pallor, tears and breaking down. We see the conflation of emotion and sensation observed by Daniel (1984) in his description of love and pain among Hindu pilgrims.

‘Feeling’ is often presented as a problematic linguistic concept anthropologically, because of our tendency to ‘use the same verb (*feel*) in reference both to emotions and to bodily sensations’ (Leavitt 1996: 517).² Similarly, introducing his discussion of emotion, Leavitt says:

Most anthropologists and psychologists accept that something they call emotion is a universal phenomenon and proceed from there. Anthropologists, it is true, sometimes criticise what they see as the Western concept of emotion (e.g. Lutz 1988), but, interestingly, they do not cease to use the word or the concept itself (1996: 516).

I do not problematise the use of the concept of emotion or feeling, although whether these imply universality *is* problematised. Bharatanatyam, as I encountered it, is concerned so explicitly with emotion and with the concept that emotion exists, as is the vocabulary used

² In her work on spiritualism in Wales, Skultans (1974) talks about the conceptualisation of pain where she distinguishes emotion and sensation. Sharing and communication is an essential dynamic in spiritualist discourse and conceptualising pain as emotion rather than sensation allows it to be shared. Conversely, Daniel (1984: 257) uses the word ‘sensation’ rather than ‘feeling’ to refer to love and pain, with reference to the Tamil term *unarcei*. In this conceptualisation, sensation may equally be shared, particularly in terms of its relationship to substance (see conclusion). In my work I argue that emotion and sensation are most meaningfully represented as conflated.

by teachers, that it is a helpful reference for us. Further, mine is not 'a field centrally and distinctively concerned with cultural differences' (Leavitt 1996: 516). Rather, it is a system which, while recognising itself as distinct, simultaneously incorporates a new body of individuals in such a way as allows us to observe processes of overlap, where emotion undoubtedly exists as a concept, although in ways that are constantly negotiable.

Lynch cites 'feeling' as an inappropriate description of emotional concepts in the Indian context (1990). Reflecting his approach, which places emotion in a culturally relative frame, he tells us that 'feeling' is irrelevant because it connects emotions with physical sensations when they are in fact appraisals of situations according to various social contexts (ibid.). In this vein, emotions are understood as socially constructed according to particular contexts and processes of socialisation. Similarly, other anthropological work presents emotions in terms of cultural and social negotiation (see, e.g., Rosaldo 1980, 1984; Levy 1984; Schweder 1984; R. Rosaldo 1994; Lutz 1988; Abu-Lughod 1986) rather than as the universal and biologically determined 'states' according to Darwin, which initially shaped the treatment of emotion within the discipline (Lutz and White 1986). Here, and in western folk theories, 'emotion is often viewed as something ultimately and utterly private and as potentially immature, primitive, or even pathological' (Lutz 1988: 41). How do we fit the aesthetic emotion in *bharatanatyam* into these models, which perceives emotion as universal, collective and subject to construction through practice and training?

Consider further the debate around the concept of 'feeling'. In conclusion to his analysis, Lynch says: 'The important point is that 'feelings' do not tell us what our emotion is...There is no single unique feeling, essence, or thing that goes with and identifies each and every emotion' (1990: 12-13). If, as it does, dance emotion tells us that there is, we have to *conceive* that this is the case, whilst not necessarily *understanding* that emotion is formulated according to this in terms of analysis. 'The knowledge whereby one lives is not necessarily identical with the knowledge whereby one explains life' (Jackson 1996: 2). It must, however, in my endeavour, hold considerable sway. I *do*, therefore, use feeling in the sense of 'emotional feeling' (Levy 1984). Whilst appreciating the need to suspend cultural assumptions, it seems appropriate to do so in evaluating a system which itself connects emotion and sensation. Further, it becomes particularly relevant in a system operating within different cultural idioms and seamlessly accommodating both. Stylised and dramatic emotion involves representations of emotion, which, as we have seen, the *Natyaśāstra* connects very specifically to outward display. 'The "idiom of expression"...is more than a mere overlay: it is involved in emotional experience itself' (Leavitt 1996: 520). Feeling here denotes experiencing, and appraisal becomes not 'what' emotion is being represented, but

how to experience it, and how eventually, to achieve the permanent sense of *rasa* it implies. Which, in turn, implies that there *is* a single feeling, essence, to each emotion; it is not, however, a unique one, because it may be meaningfully shared.

Returning to the *Natyasastra*:

A question is asked here. Are the *bhava*-s produced by *rasa*-s, or *rasa*-s produced by *bhava*-s? Some are of the opinion that their relation is symbiotic. That, however, is not correct. It can clearly be seen that *rasa* is produced from *bhava*-s and not vice versa (Rangacharya 1996: 55).

Bharata continues with some examples, the fourth and fifth of which read:

4. Condiments and herbs (i.e. vegetables [original gloss]) render food tasty; so is the mutual relation between *bhava*-s and *rasa*-s

5. Out of a seed grows a tree, out of a tree a flower, out of a flower a fruit, so *rasa* is the seed of all (*sthayi*) *bhava*-s (of the spectators) (op. cit.).

Here we see the relationship between *rasa* and *bhava* distinguished, although in ways that contradict one another; clearly, it is a difficult relationship to vocalise. Describing the pure emotional states, *rasa* and *bhava* are sometimes used interchangeably. At times, however, a distinction is made between the action of expression (*bhava*) and the abstract aesthetic emotion (*rasa*), which always represents the emotional constant or essence. *Bhava* importantly acts as the communicative baseline and the medium through which *rasa* is made possible. That Bharata uses food analogies is, as we have seen, entirely appropriate. 'In Hinduism... an added factuality is given to emotions by grounding them not merely in the self but also in nature in the form of food, music, and scent' (Lynch 1990: 14). This grounding in other sensations becomes a tool for conceptualising meaning (cf. Stoller 1989, Okely 1994) as well as pointing to a re-conceptualisation of 'self' which becomes less bounded.³

A picture emerges where emotions may be constructed and transferred from dancer to audience.

The major purpose of dance, drama, ritual, and poetry is not mimetic, cathartic, or didactic; rather it is catalytic. Aesthetic forms ought to activate an emotion already present in participating members of the audience who must cultivate their own aesthetic sensibilities (Lynch 1990: 18).

³ I return to this issue later in the chapter, and in the conclusion to the thesis.

The moments that make this transition possible are charged with possibilities which help in our analysis. Emotions are closely identified with physical experience and action. They are felt entities. It is this process which makes them meaningful, and also makes them universal. Bharata, once again, expounds that

action and emotion are naturally cause and result. Each action conveys an emotion; similarly, emotions lead to deeds. Actions are individual, emotions are universal. No two men express their anger in the same manner, but every man is susceptible to anger (Rangacharya 1996: 62, fn. 2).

These ideas fully encompass and necessitate experience, linking it to cosmology through performance, and to social life. Contrary to Bharata's statement here, however, I argue that the dancer presents an emotional aesthetic that *is* specifically linked to action. Nuance becomes the individualising concept, and, as I shall argue, the processes of experience to achieve this aesthetic are a complicated journey of becoming, neither exclusively individual nor universal.⁴ In the field of experience, it seems, no sense is born from making them exclusive states. Dance is propounded as pure science in the meticulous way it formulates movements to achieve certain desired results. The overall result, however, is pure poetry.

emotional bodies

Anthropological literature that emphasises bodily practice (see chapter two and Bourdieu 1977; Csordas 1990, 1993 & 1994; Lyon 1995) is also important in mapping anthropological debates about emotion. Leavitt cites this trend back to alternative theories in western philosophy spearheaded by the 17th century philosopher, Spinoza:

Every change in a psychic state is a change in a bodily state, necessarily; but not causally. A change in the psychic character, or intensity, or quality of an emotion does not *lead* to a change in a bodily state, it *is* one...The whole construction of [Spinoza's] psychology...depends on the conception of a bodily organism—a 'complex body' or a 'composite of composites'—adequate in its complexity to feel to suffer, to enjoy, and to think' (Wartofsky 1973: 349-50, cited in Leavitt 1996: 526).

⁴ In many ways Obeyesekere (1981) addresses these same issues, where the relationship between public and private symbols is similarly symbiotic. His work is not only important in its discussion of this relationship, but in the way it is framed in terms of personal life-histories. It contributes to the interest in individual experience (whether as ethnographer or informant, and including emotional experience) as ethnography and as creating meanings (see also Rabinow 1977; Riesman 1977; Crapanzano 1980). These texts obviously relate to my introductory discussion of fieldwork, reflexivity and writing also.

Using these theories enables us to distance our analysis of emotion from those which frame emotion in linguistic and cognitive processes (Levi-Strauss 1962). In this way we embrace an understanding of emotion which takes account of ‘the body *qua* body not simply as it is mediated by ‘mind’ but as part of the conception of emotion itself’ (Lyon 1995: 256), and where ‘work on the body mobilises emotions and affects’ (Corin 1998: 89). In many ways this brings us closer in line not only with Indian theories of *rasa*, but with the way that emotion is perceived and taught in dance class situations. Contrary to earlier beliefs locating emotions in the body where they remain both private and uncontrollable, dance locates them in a composite mind-body, subject to control and to a process which makes them public and collective. Equally, then, it does not privilege body over mind.

The concept of the universal quality of emotion provides us with the opportunity to understand—that is, to feel—emotions as articulated in *bharatanatyam*. It is important to encompass embodied understandings of emotion in these concepts, rather than accept that ‘emotion can be studied as embodied discourse only after its social and cultural—its discursive—character has been fully accepted’ (Abu-Lughod and Lutz 1990: 13). It is inappropriate to assume that there is no connection to be made between discursive and embodied emotion when studying something which has its roots in embodied discourse, not only as a dance form, but in language also (Kersenboom 1996). Emotion must be immediately recognised in its direct experiential form in a way that is not subordinate to a cognitive bias in which ‘emotion is generally understood in primarily ideational terms’ (Lyon 1995: 248). Its social and cultural character is simultaneously an embodied one, although not thereby entirely individual or personal, and we are concerned with the relationship between all three. Contrary to Abu-Lughod and Lutz (1990: 11), seeing emotional discourses as ‘pragmatic acts and communicative discourses’ does not preclude their function as ‘expressive vehicles’.

Indeed, dance, as performed and performative emotion, *depends* on expressive vehicles of symbol and action as communicative discourses. Resonating with Indian theories of emotion as expressed through dance, Turner says:

symbols...have an oretic as well as a cognitive function. They elicit emotion and express and mobilise desire...at [this] pole cluster a set of referents of a grossly physiological character, relating to general human experience of an emotional kind (1967: 39).

For our analytical purpose, however, I suggest that to treat emotions as ‘discursive public forms whose special power does indeed draw on embodied experience, without implying any

parsimoniously describable universal biological substrate' (Appadurai 1990: 93) be perhaps more appropriate.

emotional knowledge

Concluding this section I return to the issue of knowledge and meaning as it connects to the discussion so far and to methodological issues. 'Feelings...are structured by our forms of understanding' (M. Rosaldo 1984: 143). In a very obvious way, traditional anthropological data is meaningful to anthropological subjects through experience, and mediated by emotional responses. Addressing the issues of emotion and experience in conjunction places an emphasis on feeling, which then provides us with the tools to talk about levels of meaning in so far as meaning is phenomenologically defined (see chapter two). Leavitt (1996: 517) places emotions on the cusp of the 'meaning/feeling' divide, which he deems so prevalent in western theoretical thought. This brings emotion into the argument that meaning must be presented as a category that is redefined in terms of cultural understandings of knowledge and language. Understanding emotion in these terms implies no such divide; meaning and feeling become entirely identified, and emotion is implicated in meaningful knowledge.

For this reason, and in relation to the collective and communicable quality of emotion, I argued in the introduction for a recognised methodological engagement on behalf of the anthropologist. To recognise emotion as methodologically possible in a phenomenological sense enables the production of meaning. Emotion and the individual, whether anthropologist or informant, sustain an important relationship (see e.g. Briggs 1970; R. Rosaldo 1994; Pandolfo 1997), particularly with regard to experience. R. Rosaldo writes: 'my own mourning and consequent reflection on Illongot bereavement, rage and headhunting raise methodological issues of general concern in anthropology' (1984: 185). Granting emotion both systematic and felt qualities, as *bharatanatyam* does, allows us a significant methodological opportunity, which Lutz and White (1986) cite as an important step in anthropological studies of emotion. Returning to Lutz:

the task for future comparative work on the relation between emotions and culture is to specify further how...aspects of social life are given emotional meaning or, in other words, to examine how the political, economic, social, and ecological conditions of life for particular people provide the impetus and framing for the emotional consciousness that develops among them (1988: 214-215).

As we have seen, my work falls outwith this description. It does not deal with 'particular people' in the conventional sense. Dancers are particular only in the nature of their activity.

That they are *not* particular in their social and cultural background, yet are expected to eventually use and feel the same emotional vocabulary, provides the central focus for my inquiry. *Through* individual and social life (which includes the political, economic, social and ecological) meaning is located *in* art and experience, which does not necessarily appeal to social life for ratification. In performance, emotion exists in communication, and in an eternal, yet bounded and embodied, present. It is these kinds of issues that I consider in the following section, with reference to fieldwork contexts.

Analysis and Examples

emotional forms, performing emotion

With these ideas in mind, I shall consider more fully the ways in which emotion is formulated and communicated in dance. Arguments about emotion must be recast according to the way my fieldwork concerns overlapping social and cultural contexts. To conclude ‘that affects, whatever their similarities, are no more similar than the societies in which we live’ (M. Rosaldo 1984) is irrelevant to the way that *bharatanatyam* theoretically perceives itself, and to the way it is conceived through teaching. ‘Feeling’ exists in dance in all its three aspects—*natya*, *nritta* and *nritya*. It is in *nritya* that *natya* and *nritta* combine with *abhinaya* to express the emotional content of the dance through mime and story telling. The dancer employs movements of body, hands (*mudras*) and face—with detailed attention paid to intricate facial expressions using eyes, eyebrows and specifically angled movements of the head and neck.

The young woman is calling her friend. She laments that her lover, Murugan, son of Siva, has failed to meet her as they'd arranged, before the cock crowed. He had promised himself to her—where is he now? She is annoyed and confused. Did he think ill of her? As she remembers his image, however, a soft light enters her eyes. She describes how beautiful he is, riding on a peacock, the perfect lover. If he would only come, she would bend down and lay flowers at his feet.

Expressive passages in a dance item present a variety of stories, drawing on both visual and emotional images. Ultimately, they are stories which express changing emotions through *bhavas*, with the underlying more permanent emotions of *rasa*, which only really ‘become’ in the process of communication with an audience. How do such processes work when dancers

and audiences are from radically different environments from those originally associated with bharatanatyam? With difficulty, clearly, if we see emotions as culturally embodied and exclusive interpretations (M. Rosaldo 1983). Whilst embodied, dance emotions are neither exclusive, or recognisable only according to specific contexts pertaining to specific experienced meaning. Lutz argues:

Each emotion concept is, as we have seen, an index of a world of cultural premises and of scenarios for social interaction; each is a system of meaning or cluster of ideas which include both verbal, accessible, reflective ideas and implicit practical ones. The discrete emotion concepts, like all concepts (Hutchins 1980) have nested within them a cluster of images or propositions. We recognize the existence of an emotion by the occurrence of a certain limited number of events that those images of proposition depict (1988: 210-211).

She footnotes it, commenting on the further subdivision between practical everyday emotion and reflective, consciously perceived ideas about emotion:

There then may be some difference or even contradiction between the structure of the Ifaluk emotional meaning system as it is evident in everyday, relatively unreflective interaction and that system as it is reshaped in occasional indigenous reflection on the nature of emotional experience (ibid.: 243 fn.3).

Emotions in bharatanatyam, and especially in the displaced contexts I am dealing with, occur in an almost reverse manner.

As we shall see, although dance emotions may draw on the every day, their primary context is that of performed artistic emotion. Emotion eventually becomes unreflective as a result of highly reflective technique. Because it deals with what appears to be highly contextual material (emotion and cultural imagery) in an environment which may be foreign in some or every sense, it adapts, through teaching techniques, to draw on emotions of 'unrelated' contexts. Dance students are asked to reflect on their everyday unreflective emotional actions on the premise that they contain similar feelings—'a shared reference to *something*' (Solomon 1984: 241)—to those required by the dance. Further, teaching processes also *create* such feelings, and in doing so provide a new context in which emotions are negotiated and understood.

In these contexts, emotion as individual and abstract is emphasised. In connection with this, dance as an artistic form also places emotion in relation to, and with, the divine and the implications of this aspect become meaningful in the construction of emotion as individually

felt. In this aspect, emotion represents inner journeys that connect the body with divine experience. Through these various processes, we find that, contrary to 'their existence and meaning [as]...negotiated, ignored or validated by people in social relationships' (Lutz 1988: 212), emotional meaning in *bharatanatyam* is presented as non-negotiable and divinely sanctioned even though it is created through a negotiable process. Although on one level emotion is taught, expressed and experienced as communicative and relationally meaningful, on another, it is not necessarily *felt* to be so.

The quality and possibility of communicative emotion is also in many ways related to the space in which it is produced during performance. If we look at the occasional performances that took place in Chidambaram we glimpse some kind of overlap between 'staged' performance, and the ritual dance of the *devadasis*. Not just in terms of the temple space being used for dance, but also in terms of the flow of movement around the performance. Performances take place in Chidambaram at the end of a long avenue of red and white pillars at the top of the steps leading to the thousand-pillar hall, which is now closed to the public. The hall is situated in the second outer courtyard of the temple, next to the eastern *gopuram*,⁵ and the east gateway, a popular way to enter the temple for daily worship.⁶ When a performance takes place, therefore, it does so with a very open audience. An atmosphere of informality pervades the setting. There are no entrance fees or enclosed spaces. Brown (1998), discussing Indian and Chinese theatre, argues that the licence for audiences to move around from place to place and to 'continue their own business' (*ibid.*: 15) is instrumental in creating their role as participators in the performance. Encouraging participatory space in this way is crucial in realising the emotional communication of *rasa*.

Equally, we can appreciate the role of live musicians in this process. Musicians accompany the dancer from the left side of the stage, sitting on the ground and clearly visible to the audience. Dancers and musicians enter a dialogue of rhythm and grace, particularly in the case of an experienced dancer who traditionally improvises on stage. Seeing a flow of communication between dancer and musicians, and between the musicians themselves—a glance, a smile, an enthusiastic nod of the head or throwing a hand in the air—lends a stage

⁵ A *gopuram* is the large, heavily carved gateway leading into the outer courtyard of South Indian temples. Before passing through the *gopuram*, shoes are removed. In my fieldnotes I write: 'when you walk through the *gopurams*, it is like passing through a new landscape. Immediately there is a strong breeze which tugs at your clothing, picks up your hair. Underfoot, the flagstones are cool and soft.'

⁶ Entering through different gateways is associated with a particular approach and status in the worshipper towards god, and evocative of a different sentiment. The East gateway is that of the *nayika*, of a heroine or wife; the South that of a child, the only state in which the worshipper is allowed to enter facing the deity directly; the West, that of a friend; the North, of a slave (Deekshithar 1997).

presence, intimacy and spontaneity that encompasses the audience in a very visual manner. They become part of this communicative genre which both collapses a formal separation between them and the performer, and binds everybody to a particular and transitory moment in time where emotion is generated.

Dancers in Scotland have limited access to musicians, and performances usually use tape-recordings. This was certainly the case for all the performances I was part of, and the only performances I saw in Edinburgh using live music were those by visiting companies. The visual communication on stage is reduced, and audiences are less party to an interactive process which can stimulate emotion. Performances take on a more 'staged' quality, if only for the most practical reasons. In spite of this, the small and informal—even banal—events during my time performing in Scotland, were still able to generate a sense of participatory emotion. In these situations, although the majority of people there focus their attention on us as we dance, the atmosphere is generally more conducive to comings and goings than staged performances allow, and comparable in this way to the temple setting. There are no stage lights to shine in the eyes of the dancer and blind her to the presence of her audience. Instead, people are in close proximity, and communication with the dancer, even with no musicians to encourage it, is tangible.

An old Indian gentleman is opposite me as I dance. He is utterly absorbed. Around the edge of the room tables are laden with food. Small flags on cocktail sticks are stuck in a plate of samosas and display the label 'India'. An invited 'multicultural' audience display their identity on badges pinned to smart jackets, and stand with hands held in front of them in polite silence whilst we dance to a crackly tape plugged in on the other side of the room. There are many faces with bland smiles of enjoyment or surprise, but this old man's rapture is more. Expression dances across the lines of his face, changing with each flicker of change on our faces, eyebrows rising and falling and knitting together an emotional repertoire.

Both dancer and audience construct meanings according to a variety of criteria. In this chapter, I focus more closely on the dancer in her process of acquiring the correct emotional vocabulary to use in her dance, and although I refer to performance situations, I leave a more expansive analysis of audience and performance to the following chapter.

different bodies

Any student encountering bharatanatyam for the first time is in some respects a foreigner; some are more obvious foreigners than others. The only teacher who did not mention at

some point that ‘western (and generally ‘white’) bodies are different’ was my teacher in the Akademi class in London.⁷ Otherwise, informal opinions about the suitability of western bodies for the job are various. Most commonly, I was told that Indian bodies are good at bending backwards, whilst western bodies are the reverse, finding forward bending easier, and are anyway less ‘bendy’ all round. This is not only a comment about flexibility. It is also symbolic of emotional qualities, where bodily movement is indicative of inner strengths and weaknesses.

Before I went to India, I was told by my teacher that the Indian dancers I would meet there ‘are just, I don’t know, different; they are somehow more fluid’. Connecting ideas of fluidity and flexibility with the Osellas’ work on *sneham* as a fluid substance of ‘positive moral-emotional quality’ (1996: 38), we see that physical appearance and the way people carry themselves undoubtedly signifies emotional characteristics.

It is in keeping with the philosophy of Ayurveda, which denies that mind and spirit can be split from body, that valued physical traits are not separated from, but may be indicators of, valued character traits such as calmness and generosity. When talking about admired persons, approving descriptions of their physical characteristics can be mixed in with stories demonstrating their superior natures and knowledge, to similar effect (ibid.: 41).

Similarly, imperfect physical bodies are indicative of *dosham*, implying some kind of fault or imbalance and ‘a range of undesirable conditions’ (op. cit.). Figure, hair or skin-colour are placed in terms of the characteristics they represent. Return, for a moment, to Madam’s selection as a dance student by her guru and we see that it was also a selection in terms of personality and emotional suitability manifest in her physical body.

But these are also mutable qualities. A white student born and brought up in Madurai can be ‘more Indian’ than her ‘Indian’ counterpart born and brought up in the UK. It is not simply because of her familiarity with habits, customs or language. All these influences go much further. They make her physically and emotionally more compatible with *bharatanatyam*—more able to express *sringara rasa*, for example. To labour the point, of the two students born in the UK, the one of Indian origin is thought more naturally able to master the dance. I came across these kinds of assumptions in a variety of contexts, not simply from within dance philosophy.

⁷ Washabaugh (1996: 25) makes a parallel point about flamenco, where the bodies and voices of dancers and singers are mapped onto regional and political differences.

The elderly lady in the pew next to me finishes her hot cross bun and folds the paper napkin it was wrapped in. Manisha, her lecture demonstration over, brushes past us on her way out. The woman touches her arm, enraptured with her dancing. 'But your *hands*. How do you get them to do that? I think it's Indian hands. They have beautiful bendy fingers, which people just don't have here.' Manisha protests, and indicates me standing behind as an example of a dancer 'from here'. I explain how I think it's really just a matter of practise, but she remains unconvinced.

Another time. Pondicherry, Southern India. My husband and I are trying to secure an intimate dinner, but are unfortunately seated at a table with an elderly French woman dining alone. I quote from my fieldnotes:

Spending November to March painting watercolours in Pondicherry and the rest of the year in Paris, she felt she knew India. We listened to her talking in expressive French about how Europeans cannot dance bharatanatyam. Their hands are different, their bodies are different, their temperament is different. They may become technically proficient but lack some kind of delicacy and spirituality. And all this determined from a very young age: (demonstrating picking up a glass) 'La petite française...' (hand moves directly to the glass) 'comme ça! La petite indienne...' (hand moves twisting and turning at the wrist towards the glass) 'comme ça!'

The second case differs from the first in the explicit connection made between physical manifestations and temperament, which fully compares with Indian aesthetic theories. The first case is rather one of exoticising the dance, of reinforcing ideas of 'otherness' and can be typical of audiences in UK environments.

Finally, an example from Bhavan. After my first class, I crouch in front of Guruji to find out which class I should join. He's quite vague. Says I can pick things up well, but am weak in other ways. Says I try with expression, and that there's something quite 'Indian' about it, implying that 'Indian' is better. 'Usually', he carries on, 'people here can't get the expression.' Says he was told this was because in schools here, children aren't allowed to show their emotions on their faces. The capacity for expression, then, is framed in terms of 'Indian' and 'here' with value judgements attached which can ultimately relate to an aesthetic. Clearly, our analysis can draw on the layered aspects of all these attitudes to address how emotion is subject to creation and change.

creating and changing emotions

Let me unpack the questions arising from these examples. I am concerned with notions of fixity and change as they emerge in terms of the relationship between body and emotion. It is a contradictory issue, but precisely because of this, one which becomes a useful analytical tool. It provides us with a basis for beginning to understand the meaning and genesis of emotions in a way that does not rely on empathy.

Contradictions in the attitudes described above arise because of the inherent transformative quality of the dance. Whilst teachers may articulate a difference between, for instance, asian and western bodies, a more pervading view is the ability of the dance to transform. My first teacher would always say she was waiting for a glimpse of the dance 'in' people's bodies (she always looked for it first in bodies rather than in expression through abhinaya). Then, she said, she could 'really start to teach'. These kinds of beliefs invalidate the perpetuation of discourses of difference to a large extent. Further, and contrary to western classical dance forms such as ballet, bharatanatyam does not inhibit older students from taking up dance seriously, where learning dance can instruct the body in new ways of being.

How do people begin to nurture the dance 'in' them, when the dance itself is not even in its own environment, and following this, how does the emotional repertoire that the dance demands develop? Is this possible, given Lutz's conclusion that emotional experiences are constructed 'out of the raw materials of historically specific social experience, received language categories and speech traditions, and the potentials of the human body' (1988: 210)? As this chapter deals with emotion, I place the body within this frame, and thereby complete a picture started in chapter two, where the body is placed in relation to knowledge. In order to do so I take elements of abhinaya in dance and discuss how they gain their emotional impetus.

Many of the images used in abhinaya relate to sights and activities that are very local to India. Dancers convey aesthetic emotion through miming carefully chosen and stylised imagery, often familiar to the sensibilities of their audience. It assumes, surely, an element of social and cultural memory.

Look! Can you see his eyes like lotus flowers! No! Look! They're so beautiful, floating on the water, opening to the moonlight. Gather up the petals, offering, almost afraid to look up. Smell the sweetness of sandalwood paste on skin.

The belief that the dancer has in the image must well up somewhere inside. A feeling projected in her eyes which connects her to the tip of her fingers and casts itself outward. Such images, however, do not belong to a universal imagination, but must be placed there in order to become part of a dancer's repertoire. Lyon asks, 'How does one treat emotion as simultaneously of the individual and of the group in a way that is both dynamic and capable of clarifying the relationship between the two? And, what is its relationship to social forms?' (1995: 251). Observing the transferring of dance knowledge in the teaching situations so necessary to *bharatanatyam* can provide us such an opportunity. The process is one of absorbing an image from outside, internalising it, and reintroducing it to the world, rather than it being in place already, and this happens in a variety of ways.

The student who knows very little or nothing of India first sees these images in her teacher, or in the performances of others. Perhaps she has never seen a lotus, or made offerings, or doesn't know the scent of jasmine or sandal. In spite of all this, she copies. Through repetition, the attempt is made to internalise the content of the inscribed memory as if it were incorporated (cf. Mitchell 1997: 89).⁸ She initially copies the *mudras*, the gesture, the angle of the head, and then copies the emotion, which is already corporeally emerging.

Teachers use different methods to teach emotion. All of them demonstrate, giving their own nuances to the expression, and scrutinise their students' attempts. They see each flicker that is wrong—that conveys the wrong emotion—but do not correct them all at once. As with the physical technique of the dance, teachers correct when they choose, when the student is ready, and expect the student to work hard at her own expression. Students are encouraged to be critical, observe their own dancing, and closely observe dancing in others, whether it be their teacher, a senior student, or at a professional dance performance. It is common for teachers to mimic students—a grimace with puffed out cheeks and eyes downcast, instead of the intended open and relaxed face, eyes bright and vivacious, full smile. It is never malicious, just funny and effective. Even if the correction does not work immediately, the difference is clearly and visually demonstrated.

Sometimes frustrations are expressed. My first teacher, for instance, who felt that we as students could not convincingly make a garland of jasmine flowers, because we have never experienced making one in the flesh: 'No! Not like that! You really have to give it a good

⁸ Keil (cited in Washabaugh 1996: 8) argues a similar point, talking of the way in which 'muscles remember' (Keil and Feld 1994: 56): 'common sense and day-to-day observation of children learning by doing as much as by thinking...have demonstrated quite convincingly that our muscles are perceptive' (op. cit.). In the conclusion to the thesis, we can see this re-emerge in connection with consciousness.

pull. Tch! We'll have to make garlands one day. Then you'll know. When I was young in India, we learnt how to make garlands as children.' Or Guruji teaching the alarippu: 'Don't come forward with you chest sticking out like that. You look too...too arrogant. Don't you know the doorways in the temple?! They are small doorways so you have to stoop before god, be humble.'

Aside from aesthetic representation, abhinaya also describes relationships. The *nayaka* and *nayika* (hero and heroine) play out various scenarios that convey different sides of the same emotion—love emotion, heroic emotion, and so on. Let me detail the heroine, by means of example. She represents the many different faces of love.⁹ Sarabhai says: 'In Indian dancing, the dancer is the devotee separated from her beloved (God). She expresses every mood of a woman who yearns for her lover. She is the eternal *Nayika* (heroine)' (1996: 48). In this way, when Anusha talked to us about the *nayika*, she explained how her character may be expressed by both male and female dancers, the salient characteristic being not her gender, but her emotions. Thus she taught the one male in the group to perform the sentiment as a male character, although it is perfectly acceptable for male dancers to retain the female persona.¹⁰

The *nayika* is carefully classified by the classical tradition into eight types (*ashta nayika*), representing different emotional states or moods. I have chosen to describe these heroines in some detail. Doing so gives the reader some idea of the detailed and prescribed way that emotions are presented in the dance and to the dancer, both in terms of the sentiment, and in the physical manifestation of that sentiment. The italicised words following each description are examples given by Sarabhai (1996) of dance compositions, mainly *padams*, which depict each heroine. In this way, the *nayikas* are placed in the context of dance items where dancers choreograph or improvise the piece around the images and sentiments expressed. Finally, the *nayikas* are just so *colourful*. They are so typical and particular to the dance, in a way that I trust engages and educates the reader in picturing something of abhinaya in

⁹ Although these are aesthetic representations we can draw parallels with Trawick's work (1990) on the different ways in which love is expressed in everyday and family contexts.

¹⁰ There are differing opinions as to the suitability of male dancers performing particularly *sringara rasa*. Male dancers can often come under much criticism as performers in their ability to express *sringara rasa*. People say that it can be both inappropriate and impossible for men to truly catch the expression of *sringara rasa*, and of the feminine aspects of the dance (cf. Gaston 1996). Consequently, many male performers more successfully, and inviting less criticism, perform compositions which emphasise the masculine elements of the dance, *tandava*. In terms of teaching, however, my first teacher told me that it is much better to learn dance from a male teacher as they can more easily instil masculine *and* feminine qualities in their students, whereas female teachers are weaker in this respect. Related to this is the way the priest described Madam as 'all man and all woman' as an explanatory reason for her being such a good dancer and teacher.

bharatanatyam. They are (taken from Sarabhai 1996: 50-55, Rao 1990: 42 & from classes with Anusha):

vasakasajjita:

The nayika who joyfully adorns herself in preparation to receive her lover. She dresses nicely, arranges her hair with flowers, applies her make-up, and is playful with those teasing her.

Watching for your arrival, beloved with the quivering eyes, the young maiden awaits. With attar of roses she sprinkles the bed and decorates it with flowers.

virahokantita:

The nayika who suffers by being separated from her lover and is alone. She is disturbed by her (innocent) lover's absence. She shows distress, trembles, is exhausted, discontented, tearful and expresses her anxiety.

He said he would come, speaking sweet words he left, but still he has not come.

swadheenapatika:

The nayika who is assured of the love of her beloved. He is captivated by and devoted to her service. Her lover tends to her, he is always on her side, showing his complete subjection to her will.

Paint again these long lashes of my eyes with collyrium, which are darker than bees...

kalahantarita:

The nayika who is separated from her lover by a quarrel and then filled with remorse. She has abused her lover and is angry with him in the presence of a friend, and then repents. She sighs deeply and sorrowfully, and is restless, lamenting her wilfulness.

Alas! Why did I tell him to be gone? Why am I so thoughtless?

kandita:

The nayika who is engaged and offended, jealous because her lover has been faithless and comes to her with the marks of another woman's caresses on him. She breathes deeply, is indifferent, fearful sorrowful, restless and speaks words of abuse.

Why these deceitful words? This will not do! Go, please go away.

vipralabdha:

The nayika who is deceived or disappointed by her lover, who has failed to keep an appointment. She is anxious, sorrowful, depressed, tearful and sighs and faints.

Alas, whom shall I seek as my refuge?! I have been deceived by my friend. Where shall I go? My love has not come as he promised.

proshitapatika:

The nayika whose husband has gone away abroad or on business. She is sleepless, emaciated, neglectful of her appearance, prostrate, inactive, pines for her husband and counts the days to his return.

What can I say and how can I bear this separation? When he left me he said, 'Do not grieve for me, nor cry, nor fast, I will return soon.'

abhisarika:

The nayika who goes with intense love to meet her lover, or makes him come to her, in spite of impediments. She is anxious and feels harassed according to the circumstances. This nayika travels in several guises. She who goes in the daytime wears her daily clothes and pretends to go to draw water or to attend some festival. She who goes in the moonlight, wears white clothes and white flowers scented with camphor. She who goes in the darkness of the night wears black, blue and red clothes and blue lotus flowers scented with *kasturi*.

Each of these eight nayikas are again classified into three types: *uttama*, who is always balanced and good, however her lover may behave; *madhyama*, who retaliates in the same way as her lover behaves; and *adhama*, who is quarrelsome and reacts against her lover in anger, jealousy and indignation. Thus they are imbued with a moral code, with *uttama* as the most appropriate and superior type of response.

Finally, the dancer represents various sides of relationships with the divine. She enacts both herself and others as devotee, as well as depicting various gods and goddesses, and the relationship between them. If we think about these in terms of the nayikas, for example, we can see how Sita, as the perfect wife, fulfils the role of devoted lover, who is distraught to be away from her beloved Rama. At the same time, deities and their defining characteristics are represented with specific mudras and postures, easily identifiable to those familiar with the dance and Hindu mythology.

We can see that an emotional scene may be created through expression (trembling, a tender look in the eyes, a proud stance) and/or action and imagery (offering flowers, applying sandal, miming animals or activities). It is emotion through action and imagery that is particularly contingent on a 'culture' or 'place', and thereby seemingly inaccessible to some students, giving rise to frustrations in teaching and learning. Let me examine this process further.

Anusha, teaching the Akademi class, explained expression in terms of a comparison with an emotional palette already familiar to her students. It is a process of referred (rather than direct) emotional representation. It suggests that emotions are universally articulated in a felt sense. The student is encouraged to attach a known emotion to an unknown or

unfamiliar image or gesture. 'Think of meeting someone you love on a station—a friend, or you boyfriend...see them there. Really see your friend! There they are, right in front of you! Let me see it in your eyes.' Or, 'Think of what you do when you're angry. What makes you really angry...' Obviously the construction of emotion here is based on personal memory. Memories generate experience, allowing the dancer to convey an emotion or an image to the audience, with the assumption that they possess some element of common experience. This is obviously not the case where images are attached to place or to religious activities of which the audience or dancer have no direct knowledge and without reference to a known emotion.

We can refer this element in teaching to Mitchell's idea that 'memories of individual experiences interact with the interpretative framework of social memory. Interpretation...lies at the cusp of the dialectic between individual experience and social memory (1997: 80). The case we have here, however, is a complicated interaction of layers of 'real' and 'created' memory at both an individual and social level. Individual social memories, as described above, are placed within a particular context in order to interpret and eventually generate knowledge of new social memories, which are then re-owned by individuals, to the extent that the original memory becomes obsolete—irrelevant in the particular moment of dancing.

'going to India?'

There is some confusion among students and teachers as to whether it is 'necessary' or advantageous for students of dance to go to India. I think, in fact, there is no finite answer. There are always different levels to be reached in dancing bharatanatyam, and no sure way of reaching them. People learning to dance in the UK, however, often *think* they should go to India, and that doing so will make all the difference to their dancing. Alternatively, the same teacher who wanted us making garlands, was dismissive of the need to go to India. As mentioned in the previous chapter, this has much to do with losing control over students, and with the intensely political atmosphere surrounding dance there, but it is also to do with stressing the power that bharatanatyam has to make people understand through doing (dancing). Emotional content manifests itself through repetition of actions relating to that emotion, and through close observation of those actions performed by others. The image becomes itself through the emotional integrity of the dancer, who may find herself understanding an image simply because she has understood the emotion which goes with it. In this way, an imaginative reality can enter the process of creating and experiencing emotion through imagery, even though the images used have no context outside of the dance.

Memory need not be concerned with direct experience, but develops through repetition and imaginative experience. The way that mind and body interact through imagination is an important addition to phenomenological perspectives of the dance. It is of special importance when people are not fully immersed in a particular, and embodied, culture.

I sit with Sangeeta in the student union café on chairs the colour of cigarettes. I sip tea from a paper cup and watch whilst she tears into the paper wrapping of a Galaxy bar. We begin to talk. Her face is open and animated, dark and expressive eyes, hair hanging down to her waist. We talk dance. We wonder how we can make dance imagery possible and convincing—felt—even though it is far removed from our daily lives. She is in no doubt that it is possible. That through watching and through repetition, she begins to sense the movement absolutely, to know how it should be. She would like to go to India to train, but not because she finds her experience here wanting. When she is dancing, Guruji says she is ‘Indian Indian,’ and she feels ‘Indian Indian.’ Then after dancing, she leaves and returns to her ‘other life’.

Is it not important to place images in context, given that ‘cultural context...both generates feelings and provides a framework for their interpretation’ (Mitchell 1997: 81)? Is there some way in which dance images, and their associated emotions, though historically and ideologically cultural, may be successfully learnt and understood in an isolated environment? In the ways I have described, it seems that the processes associated with learning dance create a context, which to a large extent becomes internalised. Mitchell describes a similar process concerning spiritual learning as ‘not purely practical, it is also emotional. It gives way to feelings that are not merely responses to cognitive processes, but are part of those processes themselves’ (ibid.: 86). The symbol of the cultural process, the teacher, negates the bounded qualities of time and place. As symbols of the context they represent, they allow an emotional aesthetic culture to be transferred by means of embodied (trans)actions.

Referring these transactions back to the parallels drawn between the teaching and learning environment and gift exchange as outlined in the previous chapter, we see that ‘the gift becomes the locus of compelling feeling’ (Maschio 1998: 85). The student relies on her teacher to give her the key to the stylised emotional expression of *bharatanatyam*, and in doing so we see a situation in which

the person is inextricably linked to others - that he or she is formed by others’ contributions. This fact has emotional consequence. Thus it is that the concrete signifiers of others’ contributions to one’s own identity often evoke powerful feeling (ibid.: 88).

The dancer's bodily movements and emotional expression become inscribed with those of her teacher, acting as the 'concrete signifiers', the outward sign of her learning process. In this way, feelings in teachers are evoked as they see themselves or others in a student. Further, and in direct relation to this discussion, 'an important dimension of "the spirit of the gift" is contained in the gift's embodiment of the relationship between cultural and personal memory' (ibid.: 97). The transaction is not only one between individuals, but between different cultural understandings in a negotiation of artistic and emotional imagery.

Conversely, we can argue that some aspects of cultural imagery do belong to place. In the frustrated words of a dance student returning from India, 'How could we have been expected to show an elephant if we'd never seen one? How could we understand about Ganesha?' Temple imagery, which is used so fundamentally in dance imagery, is a particularly good example. In Chidambaram, temple life is central to people's lives. Learning dance in Chidambaram is an experience in which the student is both culturally, historically and mythologically immersed in a total context where dance and daily life are continuous. Embodied knowledge of ritual action and emotion is expressed in daily worship.

On her way to the temple, a woman buys jasmine and twists it into her hair at the back. Walking swiftly through the cool breeze of the gopuram, she joins with two friends. They giggle like girls and walk across the hot flagstones until the cool and dark interior of the temple. Look through the columns first. Ganesha. Large, benevolent. She crosses her arms at the elbows and reaches hands to ears, bobbing up and down. Make him smile. Still gossiping, they amble toward the main shrine. Smell of sour milk and sandal. Joining the crowd gathered on the steps in front of Lord Nataraja. Straining to see. Seven flames, and noise. Clanging of bells, which ring into the air and disappear like camphor. Her arms are raised, catching the sound, and bringing the flames to her lips as if they were honey.

Temple activity is intense and pervasive. Never restricted to ritual or festival life, it is the centre of social activity also. People gather in the evenings and sit in clusters all around the outer courtyard, their forms continuous with the dancing figures carved into the stone of the devi temple walls, or the archways of the gopurams. It is these forms of daily practice that dance students learning outside of India cannot absorb into stylised dance gesture in a way that is an extension of their daily gestures. This is obviously even more the case with students who do not have access to particularly 'Indian' environments. Temple ritual may be easy to access in somewhere like London, but not in a way that is all pervasive, and so bodies in action become fragmented according to context.

Creating and Locating Emotion

Moving on, I look in more detail at the processes that constitute the creation of emotion in dance. Representative of wider thinking about emotional landscapes (e.g. Abu-Lughod 1986; Lutz 1988), Appadurai (1990: 92) suggests that the tendency to polarise emotion in categories of 'inner' and 'outer', where 'real' feelings are masked by outward, more 'social' behaviour or 'voiced sentiments' is often misrepresentatively used as a general theory of the relationship between affect and expression. Such categories, which mirror Durkheimian concepts of the individual, are further collapsed by the theoretical basis of bharatanatyam, and by the experiential process of learning the dance in my fieldwork context. In locating the emotional self, I present a constant and dynamic interplay between people and their cultural and social environment, with the body as an important locus of apprehension. I also argue that at the point where the two appear inseparable, verifying the self in terms of one or the other becomes redundant, and understanding the experience of self emerges as the most telling category. In the following section I discuss the genesis of emotion within the frame of the teaching relationship and moral expectations, looking at how this relates to behaviour and experience in people's everyday lives. Finally I consider how ideas about emotion in dance can contribute to an understanding of self and identity suggested to us by a dancer's experience.

teaching and performing

Dance teachers, as I have said, provide a student with her initial introduction to abhinaya and dance emotion. Before she can tackle the hugely varied and subtle emotions of the dance repertoire, a dance student must learn to smile, look happy and relaxed, even if she is tackling the most challenging of jatis or rhythmic passages. Every class, every dance teacher insists that students must smile. 'Smile! It's easy isn't it?' 'Use your eyes! Don't look down!' Commands shouted from all corners of the room. Jokes about how shocking people look if they don't smile. Guruji's favourite: 'Look at you! I'm scared of you with a face like that! You'll make the audience scared!' My first dance teacher asking us to do 'different different smiles'. A dancer's smile is never still. It moves across her face with ease. Graceful transitions through smiles that welcome, tease, challenge, laugh, wonder, love. It is the dancer's utter immersion and enjoyment in her dance that draws the audience into her world.

It is deceptive. The dancer is never smiling at any one person, and in some sense the smile is not 'real'. For a split second she is smiling at you, but looking again, she is not, and this persona, this figure that fixes her gaze on infinity, is one I encountered in all my teachers. In this respect, the proximity of dancer and audience outlined earlier can become less relevant. Concerts taking place in theatre venues that emphasise a spatial demarcation between audience and dancer, rather than alienating the audience from the participatory experience, simply reflect the impersonal way in which the dancer engages the emotions of those watching. Darkness descends on an audience whilst the dancer is highlighted in bright theatre lights which distance her from direct communication with them. This ambience encourages her to develop that side of her vision, emphasised in training, which is 'fixed on infinity'. In this respect, in fact, it does not matter whether an audience are gathered to watch her dance or not. She fulfils her emotional encounter simply within the parameters of the dance, with no recourse to those watching in a visual sense of engagement.

Undoubtedly it is stylised emotion and requires the dancer to become detached on one level. Actually, however, it is no less 'real'. I quickly learnt to smile. It was one of my favourite things about dancing. I smiled in a dance class even if I was feeling confused, annoyed or tearful. Smiling belonged with the dance and it seemed disrespectful or insincere to perform it otherwise. If I started crying in a class—which I did on occasion out of frustration or hopelessness or for no reason whatsoever—my first teacher would give me very little respite. Others would be treated differently under the same circumstances. They might be allowed to leave, or sit out the rest of the class, or laughed at benevolently and protectively. I was allowed to sit out for one exercise, but then made to keep dancing. Dance is presented here as emotionally curative. It is as if the stylised emotion overrides the personally felt emotion, and more often than not, my tears subsided through the concentration required to dance, and the automatic reflex of a smile. Bodily sensation and emotion follows—is led by—bodily action.

What is the connection, then, between personal and stylised emotion? Anusha, as we have seen above, clearly believes there is an important one, in the way she requests her older students to draw on their life experience in order to create dance emotion. She even described how she observes others ('in restaurants, on the tube, in the street, waiting for buses'), to see how different people show emotion. It is widely accepted that older professional dancers are better at expression. They tend to be less athletic in dance performances, and concentrate instead on using the experience gained by their years to provide the audience with wonderful and nuanced abhinaya. This implies two things. One,

that a dancer's life experience allows her to access a deeper emotional understanding that contributes to her dance expression, and two, that her dancing experience has improved her ability at expression. The latter suggests that emotions can be very much *learnt* entities, and contradicts assumptions that they are spontaneous and entirely personal. Conversely, children learning to dance are rarely taught abhinaya in the early stages of practice, beyond having to smile.

Sanjukta Panigrahi who trained in both odissi and bharatanatyam at Kalakshetra, demonstrates the methodical teaching of emotion, which started with very technical 'action' based expression:

To show love, you are taught to flicker the eyes, and this flickering is executed differently depending on the character. To show anger technically, we are taught to keep the eyes wide open, moving the eyebrows slightly. To show heroism, we are taught to keep a smiling face and raise the eyebrows and widen the eyes. For disgust, the chin is lifted slightly and the eyes are opened wide. For peace, which corresponds to meditation, the eyeballs are turned, keeping the body and the hands calm.

Having rehearsed technically each emotion, simple themes and exemplary situations would be given for us to improvise upon. For example, for fear we could be asked to try to imagine being in a forest and seeing a lion (Varley 1998: 259).

Work on emotion would only start at a very specific stage, when the dancer is accomplished in controlling movements of the feet and hands (mudras), the body, the head and neck: 'When we are able to control all this technically, without forgetting the pattern, we work on the emotions. Until you are sure of your technique, you cannot work on emotions. But when you forget technique, the emotions come' (ibid.: 272). The process suggests a tangible relationship between 'the expression' and 'the emotion' (Solomon 1984: 246) which Solomon cites as a particularly difficult leap for the anthropologist to assume. It is not the case that personal or aesthetic emotions are perceived as systems of 'concepts, beliefs, attitudes and desires, virtually all of which are context-bound, historically developed, and culture specific' (ibid.: 249).

The whole learning process is problematised for teachers when students begin dancing as mature students. It is generally accepted that these students are able to master expression at an earlier stage in their dance training. Guruji, for example, runs an extra evening class at Bhavan for older students who may be at an elementary stage in adavu practice, but are at the same time more able to learn expressive dances, such as sabdams, the first item in a

bharatanatyam recital making use of abhinaya. The traditional order for teaching dance adapts, and in doing so helps us to isolate more clearly the treatment of emotion.

teaching and relationships

Blurred boundaries between dance and the everyday are once again highlighted in relationships formed between a student, her teacher, and the dance. The relationship between the three is emotionally charged and often articulated in terms of other personal relationships. One dancer told me that 'every student falls in love with their guru to begin with, until they realise that they are actually falling in love with the dance.' It is also a relationship that commands a degree of exclusivity, and is jealously guarded by gurus. Often, especially in India, dancers stop dancing once they marry and have children. The issue is one of emotional compromise. A dancer with divided emotional commitments, both to her dance and to her guru, is less able to give all that is needed in terms of dedication to her art or to her family. It has its roots in the professional world of the devadasi ('[a] devadasi should have no attachment. A young woman will fulfil her desire for sex, but she should have no attachment')¹¹ where the long-term attachment of marriage disallowed her to fulfil her ritual role as an 'effective vehicle of female divine sovereignty' (Marglin 1990: 222). It is the same clash of relationships found in the bhakti poetry of Mahadevi, who describes the contending feelings towards god, as her husband, and her husband, who she can only describe as her lover:

Husband inside,
lover outside,

I can't manage them both.

This world
and that other,
cannot manage them both.

O lord white as jasmine

I cannot hold in one hand
both the round nut
and the long bow (Ramanujan 1973: 127 cited in Gupta 1991: 195).

There are of course many circumstances in which dancers are both married with families and pursue a successful dance career. Attitudes opposing a dancer from entering a love

¹¹ A quotation from Marglin (1990: 222), from interviews she conducted with a senior devadasi, Haripriya.

relationship outside the dance are contradicted by the argument that older dancers are more emotionally prepared to give good expression by their experiences in life. Following this argument, a dancer best portrays a lover, a wife, a friend, or a mother if she has knowledge of these feelings in her own life. This not being the case, I suggest that a dancer's emotional landscape may be cultivated by the relationship with her guru, with 'the dance', and in relevant cases, by her religious practice. The intense relationships generated by the gurukulam, for example, or in ritual worship, provide the dancer with a level of emotional education which contributes to developing her ability in abhinaya with heartfelt conviction. By an extension of this being so, a dancer could ideally expect a dance career to leave her emotionally satisfied in a way that is independent of the world outside dance in this respect.

We are dealing with a world where emotions are learnt and created through a pastiche of experience, and with some elements of compromise. The devadasi for whom no other world existed outside of her profession, accessed an integrated lifestyle where her choices related entirely to her status. Dancers I encountered learning bharatanatyam adapt to circumstance. Emotional education for dance is situated in the overlap between dance training and everyday experience which at times may ostensibly inhabit different worlds. The inherent creativity in bharatanatyam once again leaves room for improvisation. The process overall is a microcosm of that described by Marglin for the creation of dance emotions over time where

emotions...are not discontinuous: physical experiences on one side and cognitive and spiritual experience on the other. The basic or gross level is not despised or repressed in order for the more refined level to emerge. On the contrary, in the case of the emotion of love, for example, it is refined out of the concrete physical experience of sexual love (1990: 232).

emotion and morality

The symbiosis between 'dance' on the one hand, and 'life' on the other, is reflected in the way teachers foster student attitudes to the dance, and to the relationship it implies for dancers as persons. Every teacher I have studied from, without exception, and articulated here by Anusha, would say, 'you are not only learning to be dancers, you are learning to be human beings'. Likewise, Sanjukta is recorded as saying:

I would like to start a school like the Kalakshetra. I would like to guide dancers, preparing them for all experiences they will have to go through, but I would also like to teach them to be earnest human beings and not only good artists (Varley 1998: 273).

By this, teachers mean that attitudes generated in the dance class are taken into wider spheres of daily life also, and by implication, are desirable in a dancer's personality and in the way she approaches life. Emotion becomes a moral issue. 'The force of emotion...is to a great extent the sense of moral or pragmatic compulsion,' Lutz (1988: 213) observes, and we can see in other work, such as Briggs (1970) or Abu-Lughod (1986), how much emotions are governed and sanctioned by a moral code.

Dance teachers often take it as their prerogative to observe and comment on student's behaviour outside class. It is particularly important that a dancer should show humility, respect and a certain quietness and deference to her seniors. Such values belong very much to South Indian social life also, and are especially emphasised in dance related contexts. Following a performance, for example, a dancer's body speaks her humility, both on stage and in any ensuing socialising. She appears shy and modest, and directs praise away from herself. I even heard a fellow dance student criticised for being too forward when *attending* a dance concert because he 'marched right up to the front row. You know, there is no humility there.' The suggestion seems to be that if people cannot naturally show humility in their daily personality, they cannot hope to do so in dance expression. Personal emotion and stylised emotion must therefore be connected on some level.

To clarify the moral position of emotions in relation to personal and aesthetic emotion we can think of them in terms of *bhava* and *rasa*. As we have seen, *bhava* and *rasa* reflect transitory and permanent emotional states. When performed as *abhinaya* they constitute a whole range of emotions, many of which are attached to deities. In this respect a dancer emotionally identifies with her divine counterpart. That a spectrum of emotions exists is good, in much the same way that Siva's role as the destroyer is as important as his counterpart role as creator, or in the way that Lynch describes pilgrimage at Mathura: 'Just as the world is real, so too are ones' feelings and emotions. Pilgrims told me that all emotions were good, but they only reach their true end when re-focussed on and dedicated to Krishna, through *seva*' (1988: 179). Likewise, O'Flaherty describes the contradictory nature of emotion in the Buddhist text of *Yogavasistha* in relation to the concept of divine bliss (*ananda*), often described in sexual terms. It asks us

to replace the wrong emotions with the right emotions, the wrong sort of lust with the right sort of ecstasy. It simultaneously delights and chastises us; it moves us and stirs us up with its stories, but its goal is to still us and quiet us with the peace (*santi*) that comes at the end of a great religious text. The emotion is in the story; the peace is in the commentary (O'Flaherty 1984: 225).

We are reminded of the numerous times that Balasaraswati defended her portrayal of sringara rasa.

An 'emotional' dancer is in many ways 'good' because these emotions inform the emotional variety of roles in her dance. But these emotions are transitory states; they are not necessarily related to a moral code. Instead, they are the changing surface of a more desirable permanent state, which is what a dance teacher may be looking for in seeking underlying positive emotional qualities such as humility in their students. The student, in turn, starts to look for them within herself. The physical and emotional body become identified, and subject both to scrutiny and to change. Wacquant gives us an elegant summary of the same process witnessed in relation to the boxing community in Chicago. In doing so, he widens the discussion to more general social processes:

[B]oxers offer us but an exaggerated, idiosyncratic, instantiation of a generic social process. They show *how we learn morality with and through our bodies*, by attaching deeply felt, visceral, 'prepredicative' reactions of disgust or attraction, rejection or assent, sympathy or antipathy, to definite classes of events, actions and circumstances; by reshaping our inner sensual and emotive registers according to shared rules creating a sphere of recognition and therefore of collective existence. To put it otherwise, there is morality to (and in) the lived body (1998: 346, italics in original).

In these ways, the student often begins to understand her identity in terms of dance, which I discuss in the following section.

Emotional Identity

The genesis of personal and stylised emotion is manifold, connected to notions of permanent and impermanent states, and with a background in discussions concerning definitions of person and self, engendered by Mauss (cf. Carrithers *et al* 1985), and ongoing in anthropological work (see e.g. Cohen 1994). Here, in conclusion to the chapter, I discuss how this genesis identifies processes of self and identity in relation to the creation of art. 'What the relationship then *is* between expressions and emotions can best be seen by turning to the domain of aesthetics and performance' (Appadurai 1990: 105). In doing so, we are freed from defining people according to bounded social and cultural contexts, and instead look at the ways people conjoin an identity which not only draws on varied emotional

expectations and imagery, but on divergent notions of the relationship between self and emotion.

Magdalen¹² and I are walking through Kentish Town towards the tube station. We have spent the whole afternoon drinking tea, eating chocolate biscuits and talking dance. I had been trying to talk to her about issues which I thought could relate specifically to my research, but instead we found ourselves invariably reverting to swapping dance details. Did I know this dance? Listen to this *tillana*—it's the one she's going to perform in July at her *arangetram*. Her enthusiasm cannot be contained on a chair, and so she gets up to show me. Dance expression filters on to her face. And now, walking down the street, I hear her talk, and I recognise my own voice in the words she speaks. 'It's like [Indian] dancing is so different from any other type of performing. Normally I'm not the type to get up on stage. It's just not me at all, but somehow I do it when I'm dancing. You feel more removed in some way, as if the expression isn't really you.'

Sangeeta having completed her performance a week previous finally has time to meet me properly, and is more relaxed than she has been for a number of weeks. I tell her of a conversation I'd had with her former university lecturer and tutor straight after the show, who'd said how different Sangeeta was on stage. She couldn't believe it was the same girl; she was somehow so much older, more mature. Sangeeta smiles, 'You become a different person on stage; you have to.' 'The dancer's own transformation necessitates the muting or even erasing of her own subjective feelings, thoughts, and accompanying gestures' (Marglin 1990: 222). She is in many ways as the *qawwali* musicians of Sufi devotional music (Qureshi 1983) described as 'unmoved movers, their music evoking powerful and culturally valued experiences in their listeners' (cited in Brenneis 1990: 115). Or the child playing Rama in the Ramlila pilgrimage site of Ramnagar who 'does not create the role modelled by and on himself as an actor in a naturalistic drama may do. Rather, the boy must not in any way, alter by his own contribution the popular image of Rama. He must continue without pause what others have begun before him' (Kapur 1985: 65).

Who is this person? This dancer, who studies with such joy, such pain and such dedication, only to negate herself in performance. Does the structural relationship ideal of gurukulam,

¹² Magdalen is a friend and dancer who I met in London. She studies at Bhavan and has done for a number of years. She is white, but grew up in Southern India and speaks Tamil with ease. Indeed, in dance classes she finds it hard *not* to speak Tamil. When I was in London she was working temporarily for Akademi, and is presently research assistant for a project about Indian dance in the UK, based at the Roehampton Institute, University of Surrey, under the auspices of Dr. Andrée Grau and Dr. Alessandra Iyer, and contributing to Magdalen's doctoral research.

preclude this moment?—‘[a] *sisya* is supposed to surrender himself completely to his *guru*. The *guru* ‘indwells’ his disciple. In effect, the *sisya* negates himself. He lives only for his *guru*’¹³ (Yocum 1983: 32). Does she really contribute nothing of ‘herself’ in the roles she dances?

On stage I see Sanjukta transform herself from man to woman, from god to monster, from elephant to peacock, from Radha to Krishna, from crocodile to lotus flower, from actress to dancer, from old woman to little girl, from loser to victor, from body to soul (Varley 1998: 251).

Is she, in this process, Dumont’s (1980 [1970]) ‘Indian’ individual, who is not, in fact, individual, but conceives her subjectivity collectively?

I suggest that the perceived absence of self in performance is, in part, an illusion. It is an illusion because of the complex processes I have described, which draw on personal and social emotion in the creation of stylised emotion. The moment on stage is a continuation of all these processes, and although it exists as a passing moment, and is felt in a certain way, it belongs to much more. For the other part, it is not an illusion. It is not an illusion because of the experience expressed by some dancers, which leads to the feelings of distance from the self. In this light, processes *use* personal and social emotion, which is then isolated in the creation of art. The individual dancer becomes her art, and in doing so, in an ideal and collectively abstract emotion, senses that she loses herself. ‘Culture...is...the very stuff of which our subjectivities are created’ (M. Rosaldo 1984: 150).

It seems also the case, then, that *feeling* does not always relate to self. Even though emotion is utterly embodied in the dancer, and deeply felt, it remains distant from the dancer’s idea of who she is. This is in many ways a consequence of an individual becoming public, in a performance where the relationship between her emotions and her personality is not always clear. Marglin recounts the same aspect in the ritual performance of the devadasis: ‘For the dancer to be an effective vehicle of refined body-emotions-thoughts, she must radically distance herself from her own subjective states’ (1990: 221). To reach this point, the dancer’s personality and life experiences play a crucial part, and one that is recognised and set in motion by her teacher. All these influences are still present in performance, even if they are not experienced as such. Likewise, the dancer’s personal emotional responses outside of the dance context draw on dance emotions and experiences in class. She is both losing and becoming herself.

¹³ Quotation from Tamil literary saint, Manikkavacakar.

Thus, whilst I would agree with Appadurai when he says, in his discussion of *rasa* in relation to praise and performance:

there is no assumption of any correspondence between the words and gestures and the internal world of the 'actor.' What matters are the emotional *effects* of praise (1990: 109).

when applied to dance in the contexts I describe, I cannot agree entirely with his concluding statement:

the emotional landscape implied by such acts of praise is not built on the idiosyncratic, biographical, experiential, "inner" feelings of Western common sense' (op. cit.).

The issue is complicated by the fact that, where Appadurai's analysis of beggars and praise is context bound, the learning and performance of *bharatanatyam* is invariably no longer so. Both drawing on the concept of *rasa*, the latter does not have the 'impersonal' quality (ibid.: 107) assumed by the former. ' "Inner" feelings of western common sense' are harnessed by teachers when appropriate, to create the ultimate effect, making them less 'idiosyncratic' according to a moral emotional code. Whilst they may not *exist* in the moment, they *constitute* the moment.

We must therefore refine our understandings of 'personal' and 'impersonal' to include a definition that does not necessarily render them mutually exclusive. A dancer simultaneously includes elements of both. Performance in this sense is 'a busy intersection' (R. Rosaldo 1984: 190), relating to analyses of ritual as 'a single step in a lengthy series of ritual and every day events' (ibid.: 189). In ways similar to the processes articulated by Obeyesekere about ecstatic behaviour (1981), public forms and symbols can provide both a forum for personal expression, and a means by which people experience themselves.

The feeling of being in performance is rooted in smiling during practice, and from this, students are encouraged to develop a persona that comes to them as part of any dance context. This develops primarily through a dancer's awareness and control of her movements. Guruji says, 'You must learn to control the body. That is dance.' The process of aestheticising dance is a process of control, which differs from the control exercised by a moral code (cf. Levy 1984) as existing at a more implicit level in the apprehension of daily 'personal' emotion. Instead, by controlling the body in a physical and aesthetic sense, a dancer can elicit transformations of experience, whether she becomes an emotion (*bhava*), or an aspect of the divine. Dance elicits 'an aestheticism [which] is at once divinely naïve, yet

carefully cultivated' (Padmanabhan Tampi 1963: 210). It is in effecting this control that subjectivity is lost. Acute awareness of her body actually distances the dancer from herself.

Because the face and the eyes in particular are absolutely central in the repertoire of gestures, and because shifts in the expression of the eyes and the face are instantaneous, requiring totally unspontaneous as well as unrealistic transitions in the span of a few seconds, the performance requires the dancer's total control over her own subjectivity (Marglin 1990: 229).

When this side of a dancer is fully developed, the sense of being on stage or in performance should not differ from any other dance space. Ideally, she is simply dancing. Nerves inhibit the effective expression of emotion. A dancer must be able to control her nerves, allowing her to give an appropriate performance where she uses expression to engender collective emotion and to create beauty. Appropriate emotion is not only moral, but beautiful. It is 'the inner feeling of the dancer as the sixth sense that harnesses these five mental and mechanical elements to create the experience of beauty' (Kersenboom 1995: 103). Her own personality, as bounded experience, has been transformed by her art to an expression of emotion which is no less herself, but which is unbounded. It is a '*community of sentiment*' (Appadurai 1990: 94). Dance emotion as collectively conceived, is then individually felt by those watching.

Chapter 5

Tillana: Performing

Welcome to the art gallery. These icons, which have, behind them, historical values, spiritual lore and cultural mores of this part of Indian heritage, are meaningfully mute with wordless expressiveness. They influence, however, the viewing personages like you to come out with instinctive processions of emotive articulations in their own way style. You are welcome to record you feelings.

Tanjore Art Gallery, South India.

A dance performance culminates with a tillana. Tillana is a piece composed almost exclusively of the nritya aspect of bharatanatyam; it is pure dance. In it, the dancer abandons herself to rhythm and movement in an expression of joy. Intricate beats and steps are repeated and combined to create patterns and variations, and the dancer can excel in her command of abstract dance. This chapter is also a culmination. It aims to discuss the nature of performance from a number of different angles. A performance is a chance for the dancer to display her knowledge, disseminating the joy and flavour of the dance, and thereby realise its true purpose. In performance we see the nuances of her personality and training, her dancing self and her devotion to her art, the style and personality of her guru. Realising all this, we must also examine the nature of this seeing. We turn our own eyes to the audience and see what forms beauty may take in the eye of the beholder.

Throughout the thesis I have been building various images of contexts in which bharatanatyam performances take place, designed to act as the background to this final chapter. More shall emerge as I focus more closely on the processes at work during performances. With special attention to dancer and audience as participators in performance, I begin by placing the performance experience in its individual and collective capacity. Following this, I consider the construction of meaning in dance performances in the frame of its 'traditional' role as part of temple ritual and as religious expression, outlining how this emerges as relevant in modern contexts. Finally, the chapter draws conclusions with an analysis of the performance potential in terms of experience, using Daniel's (1996) analysis of Peircean semiotic and phenomenological categories.

Performance Events

relating forms

In some ways, bharatanatyam performance situations I have experienced, either as performer or audience member, almost seem too varied to make generalised observations about. If we compare certain characteristics, however, we are able to place performances in a frame where we can begin to talk about them with some kind of coherence. Performances often display certain characteristics, creating a context around them that exists independently of their setting. Different performance settings demand different levels of formality, and it is helpful to identify varying degrees of formality and informality, which in turn inform how performances are perceived and experienced. In Chidambaram temple, or at community or 'cultural' functions in Edinburgh, for example, audiences are free to wander, as I have described. People's attention may sometimes be on the dancer, or it may be elsewhere. A dance performance is a sociable occasion as much as anything else and the dancer is often in close proximity to the audience.

Where performances are staged in auditoriums, it is more difficult for people to come and go. The people present have made a positive choice to attend, thereby excluding casual 'passers-by' or the opportunity to watch only part of the show. Audiences are seated in rows with programmes, and tickets may be issued and paid for. Nonetheless, in some instances we can draw out similar patterns to those of the temple setting. Consider dance concerts in Chennai. Here, behind the obligatory camera lens occupying centre stage, the front few rows fill up early, and are mainly occupied by people who remain focused on the performance throughout. They often demonstrate their knowledge and seriousness by enthusiastically beating the tala on their knees or hands, throwing their appreciation of the art into the dark atmosphere. They are also likely to be the most critical and leave if the dancer does not demonstrate sufficient competence and skill.

Further back, the crowd become a bit more unsettled. People arrive late, and continue to come and go, or move to chat to friends and relatives. They call in loud whispers across the aisles to greet people. Rows of teenagers, often friends of the dancers, giggle together and applaud loudly at the end of each item. Elsewhere, at end of term school performances,

proud relatives and appreciative friends form a good part of the audience and performances can be full to bursting, with excited children in full costume running through from back-stage to audience and back again.

Performance situations, then, contain elements of 'performance formalities' that exist alongside 'social informalities' that the dance context can create around it. Performances which contain none of the latter tend to be those which are not of an entirely classical repertoire, or in very formal venues such as London shows in theatre venues not specifically reserved for Indian events. This often radically alters their character, bringing them towards the more formal and 'professional' extreme. At paid events such as these, important for dancers in economic terms as financial recognition for their work, expectations surround the audience. The performance becomes a separate event in their lives, and with it an obligation to attend and be attentive throughout.

performing

dancer

How does the dancer present and experience herself in a performance situation? I explore three aspects of this issue. Firstly, those which relate to performance as the expression of a process and a relationship, secondly to the body of the dancer in performance, and lastly to a dancer's experience of purpose in connection with rasa theory.

As I have suggested in the previous chapter, the figure of a bharatanatyam dancer is in so many ways 'more than herself'. Performing, she is presenting and representing part of a process through which she is simultaneously near to and distant from her sense of self. In those moments she is visually and experientially attached to her teacher or guru as expounder of the form, and to 'the dance' as etched in her imagination. The former is evident in her style—in the nuances and form of her dance, in the emphasis weighted between *nritta* and *nritya*, or in the relationship her body sets up between fluidity and crisp staccato. You have almost seen the movements of her face before, and her expression and expressions have grown from years of watching her teacher.

Even everyday expressions can be 'performed' and remnant in her face from her dance training, often mimicking those of her teacher. We are inevitably involved with performance as a 'broad spectrum' (Schechner 1993: 21) which embraces performed behaviour as well as performance in a 'performing arts' sense, respectively referred to as 'social' and 'cultural'

performances by Turner (1985).¹ These categories are not discrete. A wider understanding of performance becomes central to the anthropological engagement with the subject, which not only frames it in terms of behaviour, but relates it to the understanding of ritual processes also (see e.g. Turner 1967, 1982, 1985; Goffman 1971, Geertz 1973; Schechner 1993).

The intensity of the whole dance process is first expressed most fully in an arangetram. Here, the dancer is introduced like a child into the world, and the competence with which the performance is executed reflects both on her and her guru. Arangetrams nowadays are a sizeable expense—the costs of teaching and musicians must be met, costumes paid for, as well as the hire of a theatre or performance space. Because of the seminal importance of the event all costs are met willingly. In the case of young dancers, it is an expense met by their parents who partake fully in the importance of the arangetram. A new generation of dancers who start dancing careers at much later stages in their lives, however, meet the costs themselves and this can be a source of stress and difficulty. Gurus gain both in a financial sense, and in a sense where money is a symbol of acknowledgement and appreciation. As a dancer begins to mature, to move on to different teachers, experiments and choreographs of her own volition, or begins to teach, new relationships and influences begin to take shape in her performance. She makes adjustments and choices, and this process of her dance is added to the formative one leading to her arangetram.²

A performance is never a bounded event. Not only in the most obvious ways that any performance is the culmination of a work process, or in the way that it is a process continuing the movements and emotions of everyday life, but also in a way that is structural to the perception of the form. The multiple identities that the dancer displays, allow the audience to abstract her. In her movements she admits to being part of a historical process, in which her own history is inextricably bound, but not in a way that encourages her ego to flourish. A bad performance is one which admits ego. Whether the dancer's ego is latently present or not, it is disallowed by the way the dance is presented; the body in performance is

¹ Additionally, and linking with the production appropriate anthropological text discussed in the introduction, Fabian identifies performance thus: “‘Performance’ seemed to be a more adequate description both of the ways people realize their culture and of the method by which an ethnographer produces knowledge about that culture’ (1990: 18).

² The meaning and significance of arangetrams in Britain today, especially in the light of the high costs they entail, is debated in a recent issue of *ExtrADITION* (South Asian Dance Quarterly, Autumn 1999). Supporting the assertion that arangetrams are outdated and costly, Shanti Nagarajah, Director of *AdiTi*, argues in favour of new systems of assessment which streamline south asian dance and provide a ‘true indication of standard’, in keeping with the context of contemporary dance in Britain. Srimatri Uma, Head of the Dance Department at the London Tamil Centre, conversely argues that arangetrams are an important part of a long-held tradition that acknowledges the work of gurus and gives the student an opportunity to demonstrate a level of competence.

multifold where ego should be impossible to distinguish. So where ego is present in performance, which it may of course be in some form, the dancer is not only subject to the moral emotional code described in the previous chapter, she is also misrepresenting the form. In performance, emotion can exist without ego, where ego is subordinate to 'the dance', or perhaps, the divine in the dance.

Ideally, dancers do not distinguish between different dance performances. My first teacher would encourage us to perform with the words: 'Forget you are performing. Just dance as if you are in class. Wherever you are, it is just dancing.' Aside from helping to allay our nerves, there is a subtext. Looked at in this way, a performance should not necessarily be viewed as a 'separate' and special occasion, but rather a continuation of a process begun in class. Perhaps it is less that dancing in performance is just like dancing in class, than that dancing in class always carries an element of performance. Only in this way is dance given its true and communicative expression.

The dancer's body, including the movements of her form and the expression of emotion, is made public. 'Performance distances, restrains and yet, at the same time, refines feeling by allowing an understanding of the feeling' (Maschio 1998: 90). It is the point at which communication with her audience begins. However, although she is abstracted according to the processes outlined above, performances no longer necessarily allow the dancer to stimulate *rasa* in an idealised role, or in a ritually efficacious one. Power to succeed in performance is weighted in her favour, where ideally it is distributed equally between audience and dancer in the mutual creation of *rasa* (Meduri 1988). Strangely, then, she is in the position not only of controlling her body, but of controlling to some extent the level of her abstraction. '*Rasa* thus is no longer an intersubjective experience between spectator and artist. It rests more on the performer's own subjectivity and mental concentration' (Meduri 1988: 17).

Consider Strathern's conclusions about self-decoration in Hagen:

For although the revelation is to the spectators, it is not for them, as it would be for a ritual congregation. There is hope that they will admire, will be struck by awe, will accord prestige—yet only their opinions, not some sense of more general being will be modified by the experience. It is the dancers who will be altered (1979: 257).

Strathern seems to imply a particular dynamic in ritual situations not present in the decorative display she describes. The *bharatanatyam* ideal falls partly within this implied

ritual frame, where dance *is* for the spectators and a general sense of wellbeing, but in a way that the audience is hopefully altered also, if only for a short duration. The dancer herself is altered by the performance in an immediate way, but also prior to it and beyond it by her training and engagement with the dance. Meduri (1988) suggests that the overall balance is one where dancers are both the ones to effect and be affected by performance. We can use these connections to suggest the transitional nature of *bharatanatyam* as it moves between ritual and performance, the relationship this bears to the *rasa* ideal, and the ramifications for this in terms of the relationship a dancer can expect from her audience.

Meduri, frequently disillusioned and frustrated by the dance environment in India, emphasises the growing gap between a *bharatanatyam* dancer and her audience, viewed from her own observations and perspectives as a dancer and academic living and working in the United States. In an atmosphere where ‘dancer and spectator are pitted against one another’ (1988: 16) she suggests that the whole basis of a dance performance has shifted, thereby subverting Abhinavagupta’s traditional interpretations of *rasa* theory (*ibid.*: 17). This theory is one in which:

the duality of subject and object disappeared through intense introversion, and ultimately, a state was evoked unlike any empirical experience. This state was a transcendental one (*alaukika*) like the experience of pure bliss (*ananda*) (Vatsyayan 1968: 8 cited in Meduri 1988: 17).

She argues that this whole process is re-evaluated in a secular context and rendered virtually irrelevant because audiences are so far removed from such ideals, which belong to dance as a religious aesthetic experience. Contemporary secular worlds have no place for an aesthetic experience which ‘is so completely subjective’ (Meduri 1988: 17), and she cites dancers such as Yamini Krishnamurti, as creating new meanings for the dance:

Dance has to vibrate. At the same time the dancer cannot presuppose that her inspiration will come from the audience. Her own inner strength must control the process. An audience cannot dictate terms to a dancer. She must lead them on her journey (Samson 1984: 27 cited in Meduri 1988: 17).

Further, let us consider the *rasa* ideal described by Appadurai: ‘The key assumption is that the actor evokes certain feelings in the viewer by exteriorizing his or her own emotions in a particular formulaic, publicly understood and impersonal way’ (1990: 107). In this way, audiences who cannot share in the particular cultural expectations and symbols of the form experience a sense of impasse, which, framed in Meduri’s argument, transfers to the dancer.

Unable to appeal to public understandings, unbounded and impersonal emotion becomes difficult to realise.

dancer and audience

How can we further these notions regarding the experience of the dancer-audience dynamic? In many ways, the clearest indication of the dancer 'leading them on her journey' is the current convention, present in both India and the UK, of explaining each dance item to the audience prior to its performance, including its raga and tala. At Bhavan, the students grow up accepting this as part of their training. They are taught that it is an important element of conducting a 'proper performance' and are assessed on their ability to do it well. Usually, the dancer, in full costume, comes to a microphone at the corner of the stage. She adjusts it to her height, pauses for a few moments to catch her breath, and stands with both hands clasped to her left hip, right foot crossed over left and bent at the knee. From here, she precisely enunciates the abhinaya section that the audience are about to witness in the next dance. She tells it in words accompanied by the appropriate mudras and expressions in order to facilitate the audience's abilities to interpret meanings as she dances. Moving the microphone offstage, she then takes up her position to begin the dance. Equipped with this awareness the audience feel confident to watch the dance in the peaceful knowledge that they understand 'what's going on'.

When I first saw a performance conducted in this manner I keenly felt my own inadequacies. My ability to translate dance lyrics written in Tamil, Sanskrit, Kannada or Malayalam was clearly lacking, compounded by my own dance teacher's unwillingness to explain dance abhinaya to us in so rigorous or conventional a fashion. She was equally stubbornly reluctant to give the audience 'what they wanted' in the form of such explanations. Often people left our shows slightly dazzled and dazed, and somewhat intimidated by sections of abhinaya to which they felt so 'foreign' both in terms of content and form. In acknowledgement of this, and against her former judgement, my teacher began to introduce each dance, although not with straightforward translations of abhinaya. Instead, she premised items with poetic lines taken from devotional writings, their meanings beautiful but rather obscure. These ranged from evoking explicit images:

Shiva dances the universe, so dynamic, yet so still
Shiva from his dark lofts of hair, falls Ganga, the eternal and pure life.
Shiva Ardhanareeswara, half man and half woman
So the whole...
Prakrithi and Purusha
Shiva wearing the tiger skin, or the ego...
Shiva, beyond perception of the senses...

All pervading, form of the formless,
The endless pillar of cosmic light...
Finite of the finite
Bliss of the blissful.

to more abstract concepts:

You say my poems are poetry?
They are not.
Yet if you understand they are not –
Then you see the poetry in them.³

More noticeably, she began to whittle away the amount of *abhinaya* in each performance altogether, choosing instead to emphasise the *nritta* aspect of the dance. It is generally recognised that this aspect of ‘pure dance’ is much more ‘user friendly’ in the context of modern audiences—less intimidating and more likely to impress. As Gorringer remarks:

There is a degree to which the contemporisation of South Asian dance has tended to involve a shift towards Western dance styles. By this I mean a stress on shapes and designs (*nritta*) rather than on facial and gestural representation of emotion (*abhinaya*), on the abstract rather than the dramatic (1999: 24).

By implication, the contemporary *bharatanatyam* dancer is not necessarily in a position of leading the audience in the way suggested by Meduri (1988), but of being led by her perception of audience expectations, which require that she makes the dance ‘more accessible’.

As I became more aware of the discourses surrounding dance performances, and of their place in historical contexts, I began to focus less on my own sense of inadequacy as a performer and more on the implications and attachments of differing attitudes displayed by dancers. Younger dancers, lacking self-consciousness in the presentation of dance performances, simply follow in the vein of their teachers. Using explanations or not (more often the former) is just ‘the done thing’. Viewed in the historical development of the dance, we see the emergence of conventions in association with particular beliefs and attitudes. Meduri (1988) writes of the foundation of *Kalakshetra* under Rukmini Devi’s guiding principles, as formative in emphasising the educational importance of dance, propelled by an intellectual awareness and desire to preserve a respectable cultural inheritance. Thus, ‘notes and the extensive explanations that accompany a dance recital today are a direct offshoot of

³ Both taken from Dance India programmes 1996 & 1997, no references cited.

the academy's [i.e. Kalakshetra] intellectual inheritance' (ibid.: 11). We can see this legacy at the Music Academy in Chennai, which is proud of its support for all the arts, and injects a strong academic and educational element to performances.

In contrast, Balasaraswati disliked using explanations (or indeed any interruption, such as costume changes) during a dance performance, seeing them as disruptive and inconsistent with the true objectives of dance. 'When the continuity of the dance is interrupted by costume changes, announcements and explanations, the congealing of inner feeling becomes impossible and concentration is shattered' (Balasaraswati 1980: 106). She emphasises the importance of the traditional sequence as a meditative art, inherently complete in its form, and the necessity to experience it in this way. 'The dancer can integrate herself with her discipline if she goes through the traditional sequence in one continuous flow without too much of an interval between one item and another; and the completeness of the recital in its entirety will assert itself' (ibid.: 105). The latter clause suggests that 'the dance', which we have already seen as symbolically crucial to a dancer's self identity, is an important actor in a performance, and in a way that separates it from the agency of the dancer. Without accompanying explanations, it is 'the dance' on its own embodied terms which is ideally experienced as such by dancer and audience alike. In this sense, dance is reified. Returning to a 'Dance India' programme (half a century later), we see the same theme re-occurring:

No 'talk about Dance'
No 'write about Dance'
No 'think about Dance'
No 'read about Dance'
No '*about* dance'
Only 'DANCE'

Individual dancers begin to effect certain choices on the nature of their performance. They are, of course, influenced by the teachings of their own guru, but additionally they may be influenced by a number of other factors. Audience expectations as an abstract but contextual concept become important. Alternatively, a dancer may choose to 'educate' her audience rather than 'give them what they want', or she may alter her presentation of the dance between each performance, depending on the circumstances of particular audiences. She is influenced by the nature of other performances going on around her, and by her own imaginative sense of the dance. These issues become much more pressing for the dancer operating outside India, where audiences may be hugely varied, and at times have very little knowledge or experience of *bharatanatyam*.

Indeed, explanations have been cited as intimidating the 'Indian' nature of dance, 'aimed at the foreigner, with the result that our [i.e. Indian] audiences are encouraged to think in Western terms' (Puri 1983: 28). Clearly, then, we must understand the symbolic and contextual nature of explanations, which frame experience in terms of struggles for integrity and authenticity, and consequently, forms of knowing. In her choices, the dancer is attaching herself to traditions already present in the self-defining history of the form. In the spirit of Kalakshetra and Rukmini Devi, she gives the audience extensive explanations. Her task is one of cultural education. At the same time, she satisfies the spectator's needs and expectations to 'know what's going on', engendering a relationship of mutual satisfaction.

In the spirit of Balasaraswati, however, she says nothing; she lets the dance speak in its purest form. If audiences are confused, they have not understood—experienced—the true and deeper meaning of the form. This dancer is also in the business of educating her audience—not so much in the *content* of dance items, but in the *nature* of the dance itself, as she understands it. We can perhaps call it a spiritual, if not a moral, education. She anticipates an outcome much like that described by Maschio of ceremonial exchanges as events which 'evoke characteristic emotional responses from givers and receivers and have moral purpose and power because they touch the wellsprings of collective and personal identity' (1998: 84).

Are such approaches mutually exclusive? In the implication that they both aim to 'educate' audiences, albeit with differing objectives, we can see that they are not. Neither do all dancers necessarily subscribe to one camp or the other, and the fixity of their attitudes is very much dependent on the practical situations in which they find themselves. Once again, my teacher in Edinburgh represents a learning curve, in which she responds to some extent to audience demands for verbal explanations. The explanations she chose to use, however, fitted her personal framework of belief. In this way 'the dance' as she sees it, remains uncompromised. In the same way, when I returned with Manisha from her lecture-demonstration for children's world day at her local church, she described her use of explanations in similar terms.⁴

⁴ See chapter three.

audience

I suggest that when audience members watch and listen to a dancer explaining the item they are about to see, it serves the important purpose of giving them a sense of security which purveys a conscious feeling of satisfaction. Additionally, it makes the dance accessible, where the complexities of gesture and expression often make it intimidating. It is not always, however, a sense which is necessarily or directly relevant when actually watching the dance. Some of those watching may only remember snippets, the odd gesture or character in a story, rather than a complete story line.

Take a *varnam*, for example. If you remember, a *varnam* is the central item in the traditional *bharatanatyam* repertoire, and is an important opportunity for a dancer to express her skill in *abhinaya* and expression. It consists of three parts of *abhinaya*. Traditionally, when dancers explain the *varnam* to the audience, they only explain the first two sequences of *abhinaya*. Dancers are vague about the reason for this, but usually adhere to it. Audience members unfamiliar with this convention are therefore left at the end of a dance watching a series of mimed gestures which have not been explained to them. Yet more often than not, they are broadly unaware. They may think it was explained to them and they have forgotten, or they are confused anyway so it makes no difference. It makes little difference to the enjoyment of the piece overall. Further, the sequences of *abhinaya*, when explained, can be somewhat incoherent. The sense of security is, on some level, a false one. Characters are introduced and disappear, the story moves from an intimate scene in one section to a large-scale mythological event in another. It is rarely sequential. Actually being expressed are the moods and emotions that lie under the surface providing another more subtle level of coherence and of meaning, and a thread which runs through each sequence.

It is these levels of meaning that dancers hope to emphasise by *not* giving explanations, as they are the ones which come closest to experiencing *rasa* in each dance and in the performance as a whole. Witnessing both types of performance, audience reactions are often broadly similar. In London, I attended a performance—a large and formal occasion—by Mavin Khoo, a prominent *bharatanatyam* dancer in London who both performs and teaches. The prejudice against dancers giving explanations inherent in me from my first teacher was somewhat allayed by the character of his presentation, which demonstrated the way that contemporary dancers experiment in techniques of performance. All his explanations were pre-recorded. Relieved of the need to speak in person, he could simply act out the stories spoken by the words in the manner in which he would do so during a dance. In presenting his performance thus, I propose that he finds a middle ground between the attitudes of Rukmini Devi and Balasaraswati. The momentum of the performance is maintained in the

way that the dancer does not have to 'become himself' in speaking directly to the audience. The magic and concentration created around and in him as dancer remains intact, distracting neither himself nor those watching. Nevertheless, on this occasion, despite explanations being given, a member of the audience articulated her feelings thus: 'It's like a foreign language. Like there's all sorts of things I should know in order to understand what's going on, but don't. The gestures are so specific—unlike abstract dance⁵ where you feel meaning can be inferred.' She went on to explain, however, how she just 'gave up trying' and resorted instead to a sense of enjoyment through the 'mesmeric' quality of the dance.

What can we discern from this? Clearly, there is a distance created by the 'foreignness' of the dance. The explanations, although no doubt helpful and enjoyable at the time, are lost to some extent in the actual process of watching. Appreciating a 'mesmeric' quality is perhaps closer to 'inferred meaning' than implied, and ultimately, closer also to theoretical ideas concerning the experience of *rasa*. Observing spectators of dance performances, we gain further insight. We are taken back to the old man at the multicultural event described in chapter four. Looking around at each performance there are always faces, sometimes few, sometimes many, that display utter engagement. I quote from my fieldnotes following (a different) London performance:

I am rapt, but reluctantly pull myself away to look at the rest of the audience. They are rapt also—faces mimic those of the dancer, or laugh at the jokes of the gods, or hearts bleed with the plight of the untouchable Saiva saint who waits at the gates of the temple at Chidambaram, begging to be allowed in to see his Lord.

The explanations given previously, although often consciously abandoned, are filtered by the moment and furnish the audience with an embodied sense of the action they see before them—to some extent, the 'physical imagining' (Ramanujan 1974: 117-118 cited in Appadurai 1990: 106) of the *rasa* experience. In this way, physical imaginings are placed within a broad framework of context where details are experienced, but not conventionally remembered. Performances with no explanations, place audiences in a position of abandonment from the outset, yet faces betray the same sense of engagement.⁶ This was as

⁵ By this she means to describe contemporary western dance. There is no suggestion that she makes a distinction between the abstract (*nritya*) elements of *bharatanatyam* and the dramatic and expressive elements (*nritya*).

⁶ I would like to emphasise that these conclusions clearly do not hold true for each individual case. At dance concerts, many audience members unfamiliar with the form never abandon their bewilderment at the complex series of gesture, and consequently, never lose their sense of alienation from the dance. They do not connect with it and probably do not return to watch it again. Those equipped with knowledge of the Hindu pantheon, with Hindu mythology and forms of worship, and with

true among spectators of the dance in Chidambaram as in London. In contexts where those watching possess a greater technical and everyday knowledge of the dance, however, there is an added critical faculty displayed in people's faces, and those in a position to judge may have little time for a dancer who they feel is misrepresenting the form.

Aspects of ritual and religion in dance

As part of my consideration of performance, I introduce significant moments in the events that connect a bharatanatyam dance performance with a ritual performance. In keeping with the phenomenological nature of my enquiry, I interpret these moments as predominantly significant in an experiential sense. In certain ways, dancers characterise the dance by its devotional aspect, whilst at the same time emphasising its technical and classical form as apart from this. Audience expectations may persist in relating it to religious devotion, whilst the training of the dancer's emotional and aesthetic attitude fuses dance with a spiritual, if practical, esteem, in keeping with her devadasi counterpart.

performing rituals or ritual performance?

In order to lead us into a discussion concerning the ritual elements of performance, I describe a performance situation that neatly juxtaposes the presence of bharatanatyam's 'ritual' and 'performance' character.⁷ Every year, Chidambaram is host to 'Natyanjali', an annual week-long dance festival in which a stage is set up in the very outer courtyard of the temple and various performances are given by dancers from all over India and occasionally from overseas. On average, this would involve eight or ten different performances a night, running from early evening to beyond midnight. Performers do not give a full programme, but select items to fill their allotted time. The audience is wide and varied, including tourists from India and abroad as well as local people, who make up a strong presence at the event. Music from each performance is broadcast from loud speakers all over town, taking the level of participation outside the stage area itself.

bharatanatyam start from a yet different level of appreciation. My analysis focuses on general observations which are used to help us uncover the processes of experience at work.

⁷ I hesitate to use these terms as discrete concepts. In the same way that there is considerable overlap in the definitions and practice of the formal and informal in performances, so too is there in the nature of ritual and performance. I use them to indicate some kind of tension and difference, but hope to clarify their overlap as my argument develops, with reference to works on ritual and performance which postulate similar relationships.

Although spatially, and by dint of sheer scale, it is a more formalised occasion than the smaller one-off performances taking place within the temple all year round, an informality of atmosphere is both apparent and desirable. Audience members come and go throughout the lengthy programme—‘people can go and get a coffee if they don’t want to see another alarippu!’ I was told. The introduction to the festival programme reads thus:

Natyanjali Dance Festival is known for its serenity and marked by the devotion of the dancers dedicating their dance as worship – “ARADHANA” to Lord Nataraja. Commencing on Maha Sivarathiri Day every year the 17th Natyanjali Festival commences this year on 25th February 1998 and will be held for five days. Dancers from all parts of India and representing all classical forms like Bharatha Natyam, Kuchipudi, Mohini Attam, Kathak, Odissi etc., congregate at Chidambaram and offer their Dance recitals to Lord Nataraja. The festival’s uniqueness lies in its devotional aspect and thus differs from other dance Festivals.

The ‘devotional aspect’ of the dance is encouraged in a dancer’s imagination and in her action. As the site of the Nataraja temple, Chidambaram provides her with the opportunity to emphasise this side of her performance. She can offer her dance to the deity, both on stage in the evening and in front of the inner temple shrine at other times, often after early morning puja, or else immediately following her stage performance. This leads us to consider ritual aspects of bharatanatyam in the frame of staged dance performances, invoking the important theme in this work that what the dancer *imagines* her dance to be as constitutive of what it actually *is*.

Despite the general assumption that Natyanjali provided dancers with the opportunity to offer their performance to Lord Siva, there was undoubtedly a line drawn between the evening performances on the stage and the more ‘private’ performances in front of the shrine. In turn, the extent of this separation varied between dancers and dance groups. Whereas dance groups, especially children’s groups, tended towards the same sense of performance in both contexts (highlighted by proud mothers with carefully positioned video cameras),⁸ single dancers conducted themselves with greater autonomy and usually emphasised a more devotional aspect. This was clearly *meant* to be the case, as those same mothers were quickly frowned upon if they began to applaud their daughters in their enthusiasm for the occasion. The humility of the dancer was emphasised above all else. Unless they came straight from a stage performance, dancers came simply dressed in dance (practice) saris. The importance of the beauty inherent in costume, and, ironically, in the

⁸ The Deekshithar priests are scrupulous about the use of cameras, and normally jump on anyone trying to take film in the inner temple. On this occasion, videos were only allowed under strict vigilance by the priests which assured that they were always pointed away from the shrines.

work of the *devadasis*, was under-emphasised in favour of appearing symbolically humble—bare—before god. On this and other performance occasions, costumes are discarded or underplayed out of the belief in the power of action and expression in the dance to create beauty. The dancer manipulates the theoretical importance of costume through her own sense that the beauty in the dance is sufficient.

As a ritual specialist, the *devadasi*'s role was a complete one in this sense, consisting of 'ritual objects, implements, jewellery, costumes, make-up, ritual actions, and the ritual repertoire of songs and dances' (Kersenboom 1995: 191). Nor could her ritual role be defined without recourse to wider areas of public life.

The traditional expertise of the *devadasis* covered all...spheres of divine influence: the personal, especially during rites of passage; the political, through attendance on the king; and the purely ritual, in the performance of temple worship. In fact, none of these spheres of contact with the divine can be called exclusively social, political or ritual (Kersenboom 1991: 137).

The ritual efficacy of the dance was given according to a total context in which meanings were created and formulated. The dance context experienced today is rarely so complete or so bounded. Nonetheless, very few classical *bharatanatyam* dancers today do not pay homage to the ritual associations of their dance on stage, or within any performance space. The humility shown by the dancer before the Nataraja in the golden *sabha* at Chidambaram is re-captured before each performance, where a Nataraja is placed at the front of the stage, and invariably greeted with floral offerings.

Gaston (1991) looks at these kinds of practices in her article 'Bharatanatyam re-ritualised'. In the article, she explores attitudes to four elements which demonstrate ways in which the dance is changing to engender a more 'religious' stance.⁹ She describes a number of dancers' attitudes to placing an icon, usually the Nataraja, on stage. A range of attitudes exists, articulated in reference to the creation of a ritual space and the place of worship in a dance performance. Most emphatically, older dancers, including *devadasis*, did not like to use icons or displays of worship on stage, encapsulated in an observation about Balasaraswati:

⁹ Here, I focus on the presence and worship of the Nataraja on stage, which is something that came up repeatedly in my own fieldwork. In addition, she examines the re-introduction of two validation ceremonies for the *devadasi* and the significance of menstruation for performers and teachers of dance.

“Bala never had a Nataraja on the stage. She did not believe in that sort of thing, bringing the temple to the stage. She was opposed to this. She said, it is in the mind” (Ramachandran cited in Gaston 1991: 158).

Or Chandraleka, a brahmin dancer of the same period:

“No, if I feel worshipful I will not make a stagey thing out of my religiosity. It is totally phoney to put Nataraja on the stage” (Gaston 1991: 158).

In contrast, and following the lead of Rukmini Devi, many modern dancers place a bronze Nataraja on stage. Pieces such as pushpanjali as an opening offering dance were reintroduced, and images of worship choreographed around the presence of an icon. This is articulated as creating an appropriate atmosphere for the performance, as a spiritual focus for the dancer, or simply as artistic innovation. Gaston also postulates an important emphasis on the religious and devotional elements of the dance in expatriates who teach and perform abroad (ibid.: 160).

Learning dance in the UK, I found the use of icons during performance to be very much down to personal choice, and more importantly, to vary according to the performance context. I suggest that at times, the use of a Nataraja on stage again has less to do with the opinion of the dancer, than with the expectations of her audience. My first teacher predictably seemed to be of the same ilk as Balasaraswati initially. She saw the presence of an icon as artificial and unnecessary, in keeping with her more general view of the power of bharatanatyam as a bodily form to invoke and transform both the atmosphere and the dancer. Certainly at informal performances, we never made use of a Nataraja. At larger performances, however, there was a sense both of her ‘giving in’ to audience expectations—especially if we were performing at a predominantly ‘Indian’ event—and of conforming to a tradition in which she had been schooled, where the defining characteristics of a performance included a Nataraja and oil-lamp burning throughout. In other words, it is just what you do. She also encouraged us to perform namaskar offstage, both before and after a performance, and would only do so on stage if it by chance formed part of a choreography. The one time we performed with live music (bagpipes), we were told to perform a very simple namaskar in front of the musicians, touching the instrument and then bringing our hands to our eyes. Always, however, there was a sense of marking the space on which we were to dance, in her insistence that we enter with our right foot first, as one would when entering the temple.

As I began to witness performances more widely I realised that not to make use of an icon is the exception rather than the rule. The majority of performances I attended had a Nataraja placed on stage, and dancers conventionally performed namaskar on stage.

The icon is adorned with flowers. Burning with small but constant flames, the oil-lamp lights the darkness at the corner of the stage. A slight shuffle of bells backstage betrays the dancer's presence. Notes from the violin surround the moment of silent expectation before she enters. The audience watch her approach her Lord with a floral offering, on her knees in a private moment of devotion.

The emergence of bharatanatyam as art rather than ritual, established a genre which theoretically removed it from its temple associations and created new ones associated with a clearer (and 'purer') performance art. Yet prior to this, lines were never clearly drawn. Those same dancers, the devadasis, who performed as part of temple ritual, also performed the dance in court. The divine associations of kingship defined the art-form in a tradition that lent it a simultaneous identity as both a ritual and performance event, and as a viable economic lifestyle for the devadasi. These conceptions of dance are pertinent to professional dancers today who rely on the financial success of a show for income. Dancers talk pragmatically in terms of placing financial stability ahead of idealistic notions about dancing. Coterminous with the *devadasis*, dance in this light represents an integrated notion of the pragmatic and the spiritual.¹⁰

Marglin, on the other hand, emphasises the *dissimilarities* between the ritual performance of the devadasis and staged dance performances. She begins her discussion of emotion in ritual dance thus:

Ritual dance performed by women has virtually disappeared from Hindu temples; it now flourishes in a very different context, the urban stage...The difference between the staged event and the temple ritual resides in three elements: the radically different cultural content of the two events, the relationship between the performer and audience, and the nature of the performer herself. These elements produce events having different experiential value for audience or participants (1990: 212).

In a footnote, she relates that her experiences talking to devadasis have led her to this conclusion. She continues:

¹⁰ See chapter one.

The reconstruction of the emotional transformations wrought by the dance on the participants is based on public actions that all my informants said had taken place, as well as on exegeses of the ritual by ritual specialists; it is not based on witnesses' statements about their subjective emotional state. The reconstruction is, therefore, semiotic not psychological. (ibid.: 213-214).

Reflecting on these statements, I wish to draw out similar characteristics inherent in *any* ritual and *any* performance situation, of which bharatanatyam forms a part. These are helpful in understanding the nature of emotional experience in performance as it emerges, not necessarily as psychological subjective emotional states, but as the characteristic subjective and objective emotional states of bharatanatyam which form my (anthropological) inquiry. Further to this, with the ritual legacy of the devadasis ever present in modern-day bharatanatyam, it appropriately takes some shape in our analysis. We can use Marglin's work, therefore, to see continuities in ritual and artistic dance contexts, which may bear no similarities as overall and historically bounded entities, but which are importantly used by dancers to imagine and construct their dance experience. Temple life can act as an important connecting space in which to place these ideas, to be explored below in the following section.

In cross-cultural settings, however, 'religious' and 'ritual' aspects need to be redefined and carefully interpreted. Part of this redefinition emerges in characterising the relationship between that which is taught and perceived as 'ritual' and that which is likewise presented as 'religious'. In Chidambaram, the link between bharatanatyam and the temple is axiomatic. Dance is identified with Hindu worship, ritual and mythology, and with temple architecture and sculpture. It is not an issue that is addressed or questioned because dance in the town, whether in class or performance, is continuous with the daily practice of living. In other circumstances it becomes an issue, perhaps due to '[t]hat difficult word 'sacred', with its implications of superiority and its loss of actuality' (Brown 1998: 18).¹¹ Again, where dancers are creating new forms, or teaching and performing to wider and more varied audiences, the question of presenting and redefining bharatanatyam's religious character is a pertinent one.

Within circumstances where a number of agendas are simultaneously present, the dance often retains its devotional character in movement and expression, whilst distancing itself from a particular religious attachment for this expression. Thus I have danced in classes

¹¹Here, Brown is responding to a statement by theatre director Peter Brook, whose experiments with intercultural theatre 'are aimed at discovering 'grace', a quality which, "since one must use words, one calls... 'sacred'" (Brown 1998: 18).

alongside the wife of a Methodist minister and a Muslim teenager. I have practised in church halls and Hindu Temples. I have performed for church groups in front of altars, for a birthday event for a Buddhist lama, and for Diwali celebrations. 'New Age' enthusiasts look for the 'wisdom of the East' in bharatanatyam's original forms and blend them with personal inner journeys, whilst Christian dancers choreograph new items which interpret stories from the New Testament in dance mudras. In a personal statement, one dancer writes:

'My aim is to use my classical Indian dance training and my commitment to the Christian faith to share God's love through meaningful dance presentations' (In the AdiTi National Directory of South Asian Dancers, Musicians, Classes, Venues and Resources 1998).

We can form a multi-layered interpretation of this. Dance becomes 'ritualised' but not 'religious', where gesture and mime *refer* to Hindu worship and beliefs, but do not necessarily *encompass* them. In this way, people may dance abhinaya which has particular reference to Hindu mythology, without personally affiliating themselves with Hindu religion. Ritual, also, in the sense of the action and dedication used to create an appropriate dance space and environment where suitable attitudes to the dance can emerge—seen, for example, in performing namaskar before and after every class or performance.

Alternatively, we can interpret these gestures, actions and emotions as 'religious' in a devotional sense, but not in the 'ritualised' ways which make meanings according to Hindu practice, thereby allowing people to invest their personal sense of religiosity in their dancing, where ritual action is not meaningful in a particular sense. Here, the general feeling that bharatanatyam is 'religious' in some respect allows dancers to imbue it with their own sense of belief, and transform the gestures to encompass their own agenda, rather than seeing action itself as expressing a particular 'belief' or religious affiliation.

where religious experience is not experienced religion

Having been dancing for about a year, I attended a performance of western contemporary dance with my teacher and her husband. We were all impressed by the physical dexterity and strength of the dancers, and the breadth of movement. We enjoyed the music and the lighting, but afterwards, as we filed out, my teacher's husband turned to me with a look of genuine puzzlement on his face, and asked pointedly, 'can you explain to me what the *point* of all that was? I don't understand the *point* of this type of dance.' I tried. He understood everything I said, but understanding this way did not help to answer his question. His sense of impasse remained due to completely different definitions attached to the purpose of dance,

and more widely, of art. Where was the beauty? The sense of divinely sanctioned codified forms designed to lead the spectator to a higher and blissful aesthetic realm?

The articulated distinction between the two forms is both real and imagined and can be used, in fact, to explore how a bharatanatyam performance is understood by those unfamiliar with the form.¹² Bharatanatyam is problematised by some audiences who perceive it as aspiring to religious meaning and significance rather than, or as well as, artistic, with the former requiring particular knowledge or skill to understand it. In this way, there is real and *felt* sense of impasse set up by audience members towards the dance, but in many ways, this impasse only exists as a conscious reaction to the unfamiliarity of the dance. The intimidated sense in which audience reactions, as described earlier, fail to employ an inferred experience of bharatanatyam because they 'don't understand the meaning' or think of it as 'a foreign language' unnecessarily judges the form as not open to intuitive or inferred meaning. At the same time, this blanket of spirituality may be the predominant attraction to the form.

It is rare for audiences to do away with ritual or religious associations altogether, and for bharatanatyam dancers this can represent a constant battle, engendered, in part, by different conceptions of these terms. For those dancers in the UK battling to promote bharatanatyam on the same level as other western dance forms such as ballet or contemporary dance, ritual and religious associations are unwelcome and negatively received. An increasing interest in presenting more formal and 'slick' performances than those often associated with particular 'cultural' events, is not only a chance to promote bharatanatyam on the same level as other dance forms, but also to take audiences into a very particular 'performance' space.

The tendency to take expression (*abhinaya*) out of contemporary bharatanatyam choreographies in favour of form, then, is not only satisfying audience tastes, it is also attempting to distance the art from perceived religious associations inherent in context-bound imagery. It is encouraging a level of appreciation and criticism relating entirely to form and technique where such faculties as they relate to expression are wanting in those watching and more easily perceived as appealing to undefined categories of 'emotion' or 'storytelling'. In this way, a dichotomy emerges between formal and emotional aspects in the dance and between secular and religious, where they are more appropriately fully integrated.

¹² I am not suggesting that audiences are not likewise baffled by much of contemporary western dance, simply that I am using this comparison to further my analysis of audiences particularly concerned with formulating responses to watching bharatanatyam.

We return once more to the 'inner tension' (Meduri 1988: 12) of the modern bharatanatyam dancer. Although she needs to promote her dance as non-religious, she does not experience it in that way. Her experience rather lies in the language of devotion, the moral and aesthetic education of emotion, the relationship with her teacher, the ritual aspects of practice, the historical inheritance. In the self-representation of dancers, religious aspects exist in practical and emotional ways, regardless of their outward frustrations with audiences whose view of the religious elements in dance is misinformed. But a dancer cannot exist without an audience, and so undergoes a constant negotiation with them and her own sense of authenticity within the dance. 'It is not the dancer who is out of tune with her inherited culture,' writes Meduri, 'but the audience, which makes even more urgent the question of dance and its meaning in a changing cultural context' (1988: 19).

It is because of this chasm that Meduri asks: 'Is Abhinavagupta's theory of *rasa* even applicable in today's context?' (ibid.: 17). Very few audiences consist of *rasikas*—those educated in techniques of aesthetic and spiritual appreciation¹³—and so it is surely irrelevant for dancers to perform with this sense of purpose. Yet throughout my work I have drawn on these aesthetic theories as important in the creation of meanings. For the same reasons, I suggest they are relevant here. Very early on in her dance training, every dancer is taught (from the Abhinaya Darpana):

Where the hand goes, the eyes must follow,
Where the eyes go, there goes the mind,
Where the mind goes, there the mood (*bhava*),
Where the mood, there arises the true flavour (*rasa*).

This acts as a basic, if at times unconscious, understanding for all her dance training. It is what she uses to formulate movement and to identify meaning in her dance and in her experience of the dance. In other words, she interprets the dance through a concept of *rasa*, which might not belong to the more general performance contexts in which bharatanatyam finds itself, but remains firmly attached to a dancer's self-identification with, and formulation of, the dance. It is an ideal which constitutes a real sense of purpose.

¹³ In Nandisvekar's Abhinaya Darpana, we are told: 'The Seven Limbs of the Audience are men of learning, poets, elders, singers, buffoons, and those familiar with history and mythology' (trans. Coomaraswamy 1936: 32). 'The Chief of the Audience' should be 'wealthy, wise, discriminating, full of gifts, versed in musical lore, omniscient, renowned, of charming presence, knowing the moods (*bhavas*) and their expression (*hava*), void of jealousy and like faults, familiar with customary etiquette, sympathetic...expert in all the arts, and clever in statecraft' (ibid.: 33).

The majority of *audiences* on the other hand, particularly (but by no means exclusively) outside India, do not watch the dance through the filter of *rasa* theory. Although I argue this makes no difference to the levels to which the dancer herself aspires to *rasa*, it does re-define *rasa* theory in a way that is asymmetrically based (Meduri 1988). Where the dancer and audience ideally co-operate in the symmetrical production of *rasa* within individuals, and generated by the dance, they are now in a context where individual meanings are created, which do not aspire to one overarching end. Whilst, for example, Feld can analyse Kaluli communicative resources of song as ‘logical patterns of symbolic material that exist not for themselves but in order to activate and bring forth the meaningful social relations through structured expression’ (1982: 16), we cannot analyse the dance context accordingly, because it no longer has recourse to the social relations consistent with itself as a form of communication. Symbols may *not* be clearly logical patterns to many audiences, yet still perform the task of activating meaning through structured expression. Such meanings may be highly individual, informed by social relations and cultural imagery, but not creating them in a generalised sense.

In this study, as I have suggested in chapter two, we are faced with situations in which ‘culture’ and ‘meaning’ (cf. Geertz 1973: 12) are not always coterminous; where public meanings may belong to different cultures, but where culture is meaningfully shared in a public manner. Dancers, often in their own learning experiences, provide the bridges between these otherwise contradictory arenas. In an embodied emotional sense they understand and interpret the symbols given to them by the dance form in such a way that forges connections for their audiences. Although ‘the inchoateness of the symbol concept gives rise to contradictions that become ramified in the analysis of emotion’ (Lyon 1995: 249), it is this characteristic which allows it to be used meaningfully in performances to varied audiences.

Returning to our discussion of *rasa*, we have seen that audience symbolic associations with the dance invariably gravitate towards the religious. These in turn relate to some kind of fuzzy and unarticulated sense that the dance should be understood in a ‘spiritual’ sense. If the dancer endorses these associations, which, for reasons I have described she invariably does not, would she not bring herself closer to her spectator in object? Choosing not to, as she invariably does, she isolates herself in another sense. It is a complicated position, but if she does otherwise, she simplifies the dance. She reduces it to one aspect of its parts—a conceptually spiritual dimension—which is so large in the minds of audiences, that it obscures the rest, where in an ideally integrated context it is defined and understood only *in terms* of these parts. Further, in a competitive dance environment, she is choosing to define

bharatanatyam not only in terms of itself, but as part of a multifarious dance context, and one in which dancers need to gain funding and attract audiences.

Being 'exoticised' is a further aspect that dancers presenting bharatanatyam encounter, particularly in environments in which it appears unfamiliar. Being labelled 'exotic' falls into the same bracket as being labelled 'religious dance' and sparks similar issues. Likewise, it may also, of course, be exploited, both at the level of performance, or in applications for funding. In the case of the latter, it is always useful to play the 'cultural' or 'ethnic' card. Clearly, it is also a 'catch twenty-two' situation in which dancers are trapped, especially if they want to promote bharatanatyam within a mainstream dance context.

Notably, the dancer negotiates issues to do with 'the exotic' through costume. Playing down her exoticism, she abandons full costume in favour of a dance sari, or more strikingly a simple pyjama, blouse and scarf. On the other hand, wearing costume is appropriate for those occasions in which a particular impression is required. If 'exotic', however, is primarily concerned with 'otherness', the dancer is on a number of levels always exotic, regardless of time and place. The costume exists to make her so, to connect her with the divine, and to uniformly distance her from herself. Whichever costume she chooses to wear, the difference is only one of degree. Among those familiar with the dance, the costume and jewellery that accompany it is expected, but never ceases to be a beautiful display. For 'first time viewers' it is a more spectacular sight. So I am saying that audience responses that root themselves in exoticism are not necessarily orientalist attitudes of 'otherness'; in some ways, as with spiritual connotations, they are entirely appropriate and relate to an intentional and intrinsic quality in the dance.

To promote our analysis, I return to my fieldwork situation in India and frame observations about performance in experiences of temple life. These experiences allow me to reflect in a more self-conscious manner on the nature of phenomenological understanding and using them we uncover more about the processes which allow dancers and their audiences to arrive at particular places of understanding. Using temple experience is a tool for me in the analysis of performance today, even though it was not directly present in the lives of many people I engaged with. It tells us not only of the historical ritual legacy in which dancers imaginatively situate themselves, but of the importance of both practice (action) and practising (repeated action) in realising embodied emotional forms.

Being part of temple rituals is a daily and ongoing experience, continuous with other aspects of daily life, and continuous with itself from day to day. Major ritual events are likewise

continuous, but cyclical over longer periods of time. As I articulated earlier, my disinterest in asking questions prevented me from attempting to understand rituals in a 'what's going on' sense. Instead, I made sense of temple life simply by copying action. As I read over fieldwork notes, I am surprised as to the extent of my involvement. Now, I cannot imagine myself the same person who would go to the temple each day to find favourite deities—Ganesha in the devi temple, or devi herself, ever-changing in her beauty and benevolence—for contemplation. Talk to them sometimes, find consolation, and leave them, rapping my forehead, circling and hurrying away with things to do.

I cannot imagine this person because I am out of practice. The repetition of ritual, ever present in Chidambaram, is no longer part of my daily life, and the emotional experience of ritual is evident only in action. It is also cumulative. My relatively short immersion in Hindu daily ritual is quick to leave me. My experience in dance rituals, however, existed over a longer period and is still ongoing in me even though I no longer practise dance on a regular basis. We begin to understand two things. Dancers can access dance emotions, including those they aspire to as *rasa*, because they partake in them on a regular, if not daily, basis.¹⁴ They are ritual, as well as ritualised. Reviewing Kapur's book *Actors, Pilgrims, Kings and Gods: The Ramlila at Ramnagar*, Meduri makes a similar observation: 'Spectators, it seems to me, are trained to see the *svarupas*¹⁵ in this [transformative] way through repeated participation in the Ramlilas, through learned emotional responses' (1992: 46). Repetition at various levels becomes important in lending meaning to both ritual and performance situations, and where both are combined (cf. Drewal 1992).

Audiences, however, are invariably not exposed to the dance in the same way as dancers, or in the same way that temple-goers in Chidambaram might perchance stop and watch part of a dance performance as they attend evening puja. For them, a performance cannot be defined within the parameters of 'ritual' because it is often a one-off and unrepeated 'event'. Those that do attend regularly become more practised. They begin to participate in different ways, and understand the dance in a way that is more 'ritual' and less 'spectacle'. The education with which the dancer furnishes them is supplemented and imbibed with the education of

¹⁴ This relates to an earlier point I made in chapter four relating to the education of the emotions. A dancer educates her emotions and the depth of expression giving rise to these emotions (and vice versa) by continuous practice. Expressions, and their ensuing emotions, improve—are more deeply felt—simply by continuous repetition and practice alongside a guru or teacher's critical involvement. This tells us much about dance emotions, but it also informs our understanding of issues concerning emotion in anthropology more widely. It also runs contrary to many western 'folk' theories about emotions as spontaneous passions.

¹⁵ Small boys who become embodiments of the gods.

practice. Simultaneously, and in keeping with dance as a performance genre, they also develop critical faculties.

The critical eye, however, introduces a further area of tension. Criticism should come second to the presence of feeling, and the connection is articulated by Coomaraswamy, who first cites Tagore:

“in our country [i.e. India], those of the audience who are appreciative are content to perfect the song in their own mind by the force of their own feeling” (1918: 34).

and then continues with his own observation:

This is not very different from what is said by Sukracharya with reference to images: “the defects of the images are constantly destroyed by the power and the virtue of the worshipper who has his heart always set on God” (op. cit.).

This resonates with the contradictory reactions to dance performances. On the one hand, people can be highly critical of form, technique, expression, choice of costume, or any number of details. Additionally, dance performances are always open to close scrutiny by professional critics and reviewers. On the other hand, there is a sense that the quality of a performance is, in part, irrelevant where audiences are encouraged to appreciate ‘the dance’ on an abstracted level. In addition, dancers watching other dancers are mindful of their sense of ego, which criticising other dancers can portray, betray and engender. We see how dance as performance and dance as ritual begin to exist side by side in such a way that elements of each are simultaneously compatible and incompatible.

We also begin to understand the repetitive nature of dance items in a classical repertoire. Innovation in *bharatanatyam* is valued in subtleties of expression, interpretation and choreography, and not necessarily in the choice of item. In these respects, the tradition of improvisation¹⁶ in dances is instrumental in allowing ‘change over time as each generation of gurus and performers re-forms them in performance’ (Puri 1983: 28). Items are simultaneous with the music and song that accompanies them. Particular pieces come and go with fashion, are dropped and resurrected. A dancer’s inventions fit around frameworks of rhythms and *jatis*, songs accompanying *abhinaya* and the essential flavour of the whole piece, be it a

¹⁶ The trend for schools and dance companies to present group pieces of traditional items obviously inhibits improvisation in the need to co-ordinate dancers on stage. The intrinsic ‘open’ nature of the form, however, is often clear in classes, where teachers regularly change choreography from day to day (often attributed to poor memory) until they are satisfied, and where experienced dancers skilfully improvise during solo performances.

varnam, a padam or a tillana. Audiences sense a growing attachment to a piece each time they see it performed. Here, familiarity and repetition combine in encouraging audience participation of a particular type. In this way, regular spectators have no choice but to value an item in terms of emotional detail rather than novelty.

seeing as experience

I have tried to show how various theories both from within anthropology and within the dance can contribute to our analysis of the experience of a bharatanatyam performance. In keeping with this approach, I now consider another aspect of these theories—theoretically and practically manifest—that lends a further dimension, and look at dance in the light of *darsan*. Darsan forms a central component in Hindu worship as the act of ‘seeing’ (cf. Eck 1985). Worshippers attend ritual ceremony to receive darsan in an ‘exchange of vision’ (ibid.: 7) where they receive blessing from the deity, bringing them ‘good fortune, well-being, grace, and spiritual merit’ (Fuller 1992: 59). Focused on the central importance of the eyes of the deity, darsan nevertheless goes beyond sight and enters the realm of experience, which, as we saw in chapter two, informs the creation of knowledge.

In addition, and throughout the ensuing discussion, we must be aware of the breadth of seeing more generally. Stoller argues that sight is ‘the privileged sense of the West’ (1989: 5), but surely this is a particular sense of vision. In the same way as taking darsan, watching bharatanatyam is vision essentially framed by other senses; music informs an experience which is described in terms of taste and appeals to feeling and sensation. Incense often appeals to a sense of smell. Referencing this to temple experience, which I do, taste, smell and hearing are equally inseparable from a total experience of vision, and of darsan.

In the temple courtyard, at the front (behind people operating the video equipment) a core bunch of people sits attentive and cross-legged on the ground. As we move further back the crowd becomes more random and dispersed. They watch the performance sitting in groups, perhaps chatting or sharing food. Solitary figures stand leaning against the pillars. Occasional cows cross in front of them. A man wheeling a laden bicycle crosses from the east to the north gate and pauses briefly on his way; his eyes draw in a fleeting glimpse of the dancer’s movement, his ears catch a rhythm rebounding from the mridangam into the air. This audience is shifting and changing all the time as they move around the temple complex or visit the shrines for evening puja. A basket of bananas is offered to the audience as prasad.

As I watched dance taking place in India, and most especially in Chidambaram temple, I had a strong sense that audience behaviour in performances betrayed a level of vision, or expectation of vision, that related to ideas I had encountered about darsan. The informality of performances—the coming and going, the seeming lack of attention, the sociable atmosphere—was very much a continuation of temple life. Contrary to aesthetic theories of *rasa*—in which appreciation of a performance is a conscious state of being, leading to an unconscious state of bliss, and one that may be improved with practice—another kind of appreciation was emerging. This kind of appreciation was simply to do with seeing, or even with just glimpsing.¹⁷ Involvement with the performance came through the eyes, and through being in the presence of a performance, if only for a limited amount of time and with a limited degree of attention. And if '[a] society's visual aesthetic is, in its widest sense, the way in which people in that society see' (Coote 1992: 248), this vision, on another level, is also entirely related to aesthetic appreciation. In these situations, the performance as auspicious event and the dancer as auspicious vehicle are emphasised. In the same way that temple worship is conducted, so is attending performances. The dancer in her aesthetic quality, in her beauty, and as divine, appeals to an unconscious sense of appreciation in very much the same way that deities are glimpsed and internalised during a visit to the temple.

Those familiar with temple worship, who value seeing in a particular way, bring an element of temple participation to their appreciation of the dance. On this embodied level, they draw a thread between dance as part of ritual, and dance as a staged performance. Nevertheless, aware of the *distance* between it and devadasi culture, implying this religious aspect to its character does not compromise its status as art. Neither, on one level, does it compromise the existence of *rasa* in the dance. The state of bliss and one-ness with god in the philosophical 'high art' sense, is continuous with the experience of darsan and general forms of temple worship. In this respect, can we see the bharatanatyam dancer in a role relating to the devadasi beyond the space it takes in her imagination and in the imaginations of those who watch, and connect both performances instead to a way of seeing? And is this analysis of watching performance compatible with *rasa* theory, in spite of the apparent philosophical and somewhat exclusive bias surrounding *rasa*? As Hughes-Freeland reports, in the words of a Javanese dancer, 'the audience sees not with its eyes, but with its *rasa*' (1997b: 61).

¹⁷ In his analysis of the Ramlila at Ramnagar, Schechner draws particular attention to the importance of 'glimpsing' as follows: 'the darshans of Ramlila are effective because they are *jhanki*, literally a "glimpse." *Jhanki* is a word some Indian theatre workers use to disparage shows emphasising spectacle over content. But *jhanki* is much appreciated by ordinary Indians...For many Ramlila spectators *jhanki* distils from the flow of the action a crystalline glimpse of a cosmic, eternal divinity' (1993: 169).

Those unfamiliar with the dance's historical or ritual context, however, approach bharatanatyam performances from the opposite direction, and in doing so create the new areas of tension that dancers have to address described throughout this chapter. Rather than being continuously informed by a sense of embodied vision, these audiences create their own images that place dance in an inappropriate and misinformed religious space. Their experience of performance is channelled by imaginative perceptions of dance as religious, which are often not historically based, and which at times *do* compromise its status as art, explaining the lengths that dancers go to distance themselves from its—this—religious aspect. Here, for example, the devadasi is a romantic figure in a construct of temple worship, or she may not 'be' at all, but simply disappear under a label of 'temple dance' and its vague connotations. Likewise, bharatanatyam is imagined in a space of eastern mysticism and becomes a motif for spirituality. Only through an engagement with bharatanatyam over time, and in a particular way, does a form of seeing surface which can encompass the combined character of ritual and art in an easy, comfortable and unselfconscious way.

god as audience

To complete the picture we consider one final audience—a dancer's audience with god. Here, I parallel the dancer's experience of 'the dance' as a mediating mechanism, with her experience of 'god' as audience. Where there is a potential hiatus with her audience, often filled with a measure of dissatisfaction, the dancer gains satisfaction by entering into a dialogue with the divine. In this way, she appeals to an internalised sense of purpose, emphasised by her training in the devotional aspects of bharatanatyam. The choice to create 'ritual-type' spaces during performance, whether visible or internal, are not only following conventions prescribed by gurus or prompted by traditional expectations, but also allow the dancer to set parameters for her own personal experience of the performance. In fact, to express dissatisfaction with a performance based on audience response in some ways reflects badly on a dancer's true relationship with the dance. It is to this end that teachers say 'it doesn't matter where you are or who you dance for; it is just dance.'

I do not want to argue this is a failsafe mechanism, or one which describes the experience of all dancers all of the time—the imagination is continually in negotiation with 'reality' in the creation of experience. In obvious connection to chapter two, also, Kapferer, who is actually discussing aspects of the body in fear, nevertheless articulates this kind of processes:

The imagination plays within the space of the experiencing body withdrawn into itself...the imagination moves freely, and like the other senses, it draws

the possibilities of external realities within the body of experience and makes them real within the lived experience of the body (1997: 230).

I suggest that dancers in potentially isolated positions from their audiences, use devotional resources given to them during training and fused with their conception of the dance, to mediate their own emotional responses in performance. In fulfilling the expectations of the divine element in the dance, they themselves can generate personal fulfilment.

So the dancer cannot control her audiences. She can try to direct them, educate them at the start of her performance with explanations and programme notes. She can give indications in which to frame an imaginative experience of the dance, or formulate an appropriate response, but ultimately she cannot predict how people will experience her dancing. In a mixture of imagination and experience manifest in an individual's cultural framework, audience members themselves construct a response to the dance and the dancer, which may leave the latter fulfilled or frustrated on one level, but which is to an extent dissipated long-term by a faith in her sense of purpose.

A Place of Beauty

To conclude this chapter, I start with a detailed piece of ethnography. I then use it to place the notion of performance experiences, particularly in relation to beauty, in a broader frame of theoretical understanding outlined by Daniel, and in reference to Peircean conceptual categories.

a village hall in northumberland

Towards the end of my period of fieldwork in London, I was asked by my mother-in-law to give a lecture-demonstration on bharatanatyam to her local (women's) discussion group. My initial reaction was one of horror and fear, way out of proportion with the low-key nature of the request. All the experiences of my encounters with dancing hitherto rushed to the surface. On reflection, it was very much the last item in a performance, or an endpoint in my fieldwork, or a final chapter. Firstly, based on my first teacher's beliefs about presenting the dance and about the dance in general, I did not want to give any 'performances'. The very idea of a 'lecture-demonstration' highlighted in me her misgivings about explanations, and about the intellectualisation of dance through my research in general; about the redundancy

of 'talking about dance', and principally about my ability to do so at such an early stage of my dance career. Ironically enough, however, my time with her had been the period during which I performed on a regular basis, and since leaving her, I was very much out of touch with my performing self, and with rehearsing dance items which are good for performances of this type. Teachers in London had all elected to put me 'back to basics' and focus strictly on adavus, leaving me now at a huge distance from performing and extremely nervous about doing it.

Further, I had no specific teacher at the time whom I could turn to in order to gain blessing for the 'performance', or who could take the decision about whether to do it or not out of my hands. I was on my own both making the decision and giving the demonstration, and unused to this level of autonomy within the dance context. This brought up two related issues: my sense of inadequacy in my ability to do it at all (i.e. lack of ego), not even having reached arangetram level, and the sense of guilt that I should make such a decision which represented my ego. On the other hand, in London I had seen dancers give 'lecture-demonstrations' without batting an eyelid, and the teacher at Akademi was equally blasé and enthusiastic in encouraging me to do it. Given the situation, that I *would* do it was inevitable.

I, of course, turned to my own sense of the dance. I justified what I would do and why I would do it, regardless of the voices of former teachers ringing in my ears. And Madam, I knew, would have been thrilled to have her face on a slide projector in a small Northumberland village, and to see the dance brought to those with no knowledge of it whatsoever. I would even give explanations, which is something I had never done before. Of course it was fine. I loved it. The drama in my head disappeared in the enjoyment of sharing the dance with a willing and interested audience of women, almost all over fifty, if not sixty, in a village hall especially hired for the occasion. They loved the slides, the stories, the costume. They gave me a beautiful bunch of flowers. They were amazed that I thwacked my feet on the hard floor to beat the rhythms with no apparent pain, and they asked questions with reference to slightly dusty colonial notions of 'the east'. Some of them nodded off.

Afterwards I received two cards of thanks that I refer to in detail, as they exemplify many points in this chapter, whilst at the same time displaying a sense both of simplicity and sophistication that relates to the ensuing discussion.

The first card runs thus:

Thank you for two hours of delight. The slides and commentary followed by your vivacious dancing transformed that room into a place of beauty and magic.

This response is a response of the imagination, formulated through visual experience, and in response to slides and general explanations about *bharatanatyam*. It seems to portray, however, a sophisticated experience of the dance along the lines of *rasa*, where ‘dancing is action which beautifies the world’ (Hughes-Freeland 1997b: 61), without any recourse to *rasa* theory, which I did not touch on in my talk. We see a sense of devolved boundaries where the room, not just the individual is transformed into a place of ‘beauty and magic’. Beauty, as we have seen, is an entirely appropriate experience, denoting auspiciousness and level of feeling in an object beyond its simple appearance. Further, it is connected to magic. Magic in this context is not of this world, and conjures images of an experience unrelated to the every day. It is also a very generalised response, unconcerned with complications of the meaning of *abhinaya* and unfamiliar gestures. Undoubtedly, it is also tinged with a sense of the exotic, very much contributing to the imaginative experience and to the responses the evening elicited.

Turning to the second card, we see elements of overlap:

The display of indian dance was wonderful and had the ‘taste of the eternal’. I really enjoyed the evening and would love to see further but think that the charm of the explanations made it much easier to comprehend the dance—loved Ganesha and ‘ears’.

Here we have reference to explanations as a helpful device. As argued earlier, I posit these as primarily giving unfamiliar audience members the confidence to enter into a dialogue with the dance, rather than a detailed understanding of complex *abhinaya*. Thus the overriding sentiments here are also ones of generalised feelings about the performance. The generalised feeling here is a ‘taste of the eternal’ which may again be interpreted as an appropriate response, both in terms of *rasa* theory, and in terms of ritual theories of dance and time.¹⁸ Even the vocabulary choice of ‘taste’ could not be more apt, with its ramifications in terms of the senses accompanying the experience. Further, although the grammar and choice of words is somewhat mystifying, perhaps leaving too much room for conjecture, we can detect a sense of dissatisfaction with the level of ‘seeing’, which is posited as different from the simple ‘comprehension’ which the explanations facilitated. Alternatively, of course, the

¹⁸ For a fuller discussion of the ritual significance of time in modern-day contexts, see the following discussion.

words simply express her interest in seeing more bharatanatyam performances—a chance to practise her part as watcher.

significant experience

How can we interpret these kinds of responses and bring this chapter to a close? Very simply, we can believe dancers; we can believe in the dance as a powerful medium which elicits a universal emotional response in those who watch it, acting in a way that rises above social and cultural background. Believing thus is sound phenomenological understanding. Attempting to *experience* thus, better still. To this end, I engage the reader in poetic and emotional responses. To theorise the experience, I turn to Daniel's use of Peircean semiological and phenomenological categories (1984, 1996) as a point of interpretative reference, and, eventually, a point of synthesis between the two. Rather than attempting a complex and comprehensive survey of Peirce's theories, or indeed Daniel's response to them, I want to use them as a simple device to think about the relationship between beauty and time in performance, and how this can help frame experience. In doing so, I also engage ideas cited about the aesthetic, and about knowledge, all present in the dancer as she holds the audience in a performed expression of colour and sentiment.

The situation in which a bharatanatyam dancer finds herself is not dissimilar to Daniel's description of semeiosis as 'the activity of the giving, the receiving, the transforming and the disseminating of signs' (1996: 121). In Peircean terms, 'signs' take the form of icons, indexes and symbols, which are not always mutually exclusive in their appeal to meaning. In pristine terms, they are identified thus: the iconic sign finds meaning in resemblance, which may have an open and unspecified quality; the indexical sign identifies its object by a direct link in a relationship of cause and effect; as symbol, the sign is made meaningful by cultural convention, subject to specific and habitual labelling.

How does the dancer activate the sign? As we have seen, she seeks to stimulate various emotions through the aesthetic form, which we are now considering in the light of performance. With the aesthetic playing a crucial role, however, is it the case that 'any representation of the aesthetic is by its very nature incomplete and vague, and, although richly suggestive, no number of objectifications can exhaust it' (Daniel 1996: 135)? In as much as dance, and indeed *rasa*, are irreducible, which I believe they are, this is so, but in the case of bharatanatyam, there is a further dimension. Aesthetic in itself, bharatanatyam is in fact also a representation and objectification *of* the aesthetic, of the ultimate experience of beauty, and of knowledge through *rasa*. We are dealing, therefore, not only with how we

may best find the descriptive terms to analyse dance, but also with the way in which the dance itself succeeds in the same problem, without losing 'a measure of its truth' (ibid.: 139).

Peirce develops a scheme that relates signs (icons, indexes and symbols) to their corresponding category of experience (firstness, secondness and thirdness). We are primarily concerned with the first and last; firstness, as the pre-reflective category of experience, and thirdness, as the moment when experience becomes judged, and thereby enters processes of cultural expectation.¹⁹ The iconic sign encapsulates firstness, with its capacity for unspecified and ramified qualities, whilst the particularity and conventionality of the symbol delineates the parameters of culture which thirdness represents. With reference to Munn (1986), who frames the aesthetic in terms of canoes and Kula valuables in Gawa (Papua New Guinea),²⁰ Daniel (1996) postulates a further category of signification with respect to experiencing beauty. He argues that beauty is largely best understood as a 'qualisign', and related to the Peircean category of firstness. It is a 'representation alone' (ibid.: 135) because 'any given representation of beauty even when interpreted as such, only reveals the profundity of the beautiful' (ibid.: 136). In this way, beauty appropriately remains outside the process and analytical frame of semeiosis, intangible, and outside the reaches of conscious articulation. We need to relate this to the aesthetic beauty of bharatanatyam.

Bharatanatyam in the physical and sensational nature of dance, successfully understands beauty as a qualisign, whilst simultaneously using symbolic, iconic and to some extent, indexical signs to portray it. It does not resort to conventional processes of signification to do so. In the first instance, access to the experience of beauty is available and disseminated using qualisigns *per se*, where meaning is direct, embodied and experienced, rather than understood as a representation of meaning. Beauty as a qualisign is a 'felt quality of experience in toto—present, immediate, uncategorised and prereflective' (ibid.: 152). It is this quality of dance that allows for 'inexact' understandings such as those cited above, by two elderly women from the north-east of England, to be reached. Such understandings entirely complement and encompass the meaningful experience of knowledge outlined in chapter two, in the same way that Daniel's pilgrim experiences true knowledge through the

¹⁹ In his discussion, Daniel is not concerned primarily with beauty, but with the relationship between beauty, pain and terror in the context of Sri Lanka's Estate Tamils. In his analysis, with particular reference to pain, secondness also emerges as an important category.

²⁰ That we find ourselves once again referring to Kula valuables is a felicitous connection, through Gell (1998), with previous discussions in chapters one and three where the persona of the guru is discussed with reference to the Kula operator in terms of their shared quality of agency and the 'field of influence' (Munn 1986) they engender.

physical experiences that the personal journey of pilgrimage entails (1984). Similarly, *rasa* is meaningfully apprehended in this way.

This being so, Daniel continues: '[q]ualisigns do enter into cultural processes of significance when they are embodied and interpreted and where judgements and evaluations are made' (1996: 152). And in conclusion 'it is in thirdness that semeiosis resumes its continuity, its movement. Thirdness is the domain of meaning' (op. cit.). We are confused now. How is this so, if, as qualisigns, beauty and dance belong to the category of firstness? Thirdness is indeed a domain of meaning in dance, but we should not assume that embodying a qualisign necessarily involves interpretation, judgement and evaluation, or that meaning is uni-dimensional. To interpret dance as such precludes its deepest objective. Within dance, qualisigns are inherently dynamic. They do not have to be *made* continuous through the category of thirdness, because, importantly, *meaning* is nested elsewhere. Symbolic and indexical meanings in dance are not finite.

In the name of meaning, however, descriptive emotional and mythological sequences are also brought into being with gesture, expression and mudra. They are indeed symbolic, iconic, or, perhaps, indexical, if we place them in relation to the dancer. They are meticulously so, laid out in text, and taught with precise judgement and definition. They may be witnessed in this manner also and thereby lend the dance another, more particular layer of meaning which indeed relies on thirdness to lend them movement. Specific knowledge of this aspect of the performance informs the understandings with which some audience members approach and witness the dance. These may be culturally or personally specific and exist at a level of meaning that reflects a particular, and rewarding way of knowing, although not an exhaustive one.

But in the same way that pilgrims reach true knowledge with the transition from thirdness to firstness on their journey (Daniel 1984), so too, does controlled and articulated emotion in *bharatanatyam* find its infinite end.²¹ Because these meanings are beyond or pre-judgement, they are not necessarily culturally or personally specific. Unlike Daniel's pilgrims, however, they do not necessarily become known to the cross-cultural audiences of my fieldwork in a unilineal progression from thirdness to firstness. Rather, these experiences of watching *bharatanatyam* have a random, transitory and unexpected quality. Dancing as a qualisign acts at times as a direct appeal to the embodied sense of both dancer and audience, which

²¹ Daniel (1984) also describes this progression as a transition from analytic to synthetic knowledge, the former belonging to Peircean philosophy, the latter to Tamilian. This idea re-emerges in the conclusion to follow.

allows people to form generalised, abstract and ‘fuzzy’ opinions and emotional responses, where the particular, the indexical or symbolic sign, is not immediately accessible. The dancer’s quality is most accurately perceived overall as iconic, and dance, as a physical and beautiful aesthetic, is uniquely placed to describe beauty.

timing performances

We are now in a position to discuss how signs are absorbed into processes of time. Performances of dance are necessarily linked to time, not only in a direct and obvious sense of moving through time and space (and very specifically linked to ‘timing’), but also in a sense that links them to ritual efficacy. In Marglin’s analysis of devadasi temple ritual we see how dance in temple ritual intrinsically assured the renewal of time, where the devadasi was associated with Krishna’s *gopis* (his lovers) rather than his wife (cf. Marglin 1985). Through this association, timelessness is seen as essentially auspicious: ‘The gopis act not in terms of the future, but for the action itself, as if it were timeless’ (ibid.: 203). Using these understandings, we can pursue them further in relation to Marglin’s work. She connects the nature of auspiciousness and inauspiciousness with time. If beauty is an auspicious quality, we can perhaps also connect it with the timeless quality associated with auspiciousness. The dancer, as a beautiful object, temporarily defies time as she dances, in the same way that the permanent state of the devadasi places her outside human time through her marriage with god (Marglin 1985).

Good (2000), however, convincingly argues that Hindu ritual in fact represents the dual quality of time, not so much making it subject to ‘timelessness’ but to different cycles of time. Within these categories, ‘timelessness’ is more accurately represented as repetitive and relational time, rather than the historical time of conventional experience.²² Perhaps, then, ‘as if it were timeless’ is the operative phrase in Marglin’s statement. Though *bharatanatyam* performances as *events* are not timeless—rarely, even, subject to Good’s ritual time and that of the devadasi’s dance as part of ritual—qualities of timelessness imbue the moments that constitute understanding on an embodied level. It is no coincidence that dance teachers are rigorous about students removing their watches during class.

This state connects closely with our analysis, in which meanings are transferred from dancer to audience through the physical form, and where dance, although no longer a ritual act in

²² Turner adopts the terms ‘anti-temporality’, ‘contra-temporality’ or ‘meta-temporality’ to describe moments of time in ritual and/or performance, the ‘quintessence’ of which ‘[have] been called absolute timelessness, Eternity’ (1985: 246).

the sense of the devadasi, takes recourse to ritual. In performance, signs are actualised. Consider Kersenboom's description of the process as it relates to her work on the Tamil text:

[T]he interpreter dances the text and even becomes the text as an ultimate act of interpretation. She is the 'marked', the Sign signed by and signalling her culture. It can do so only because it is embedded and nourished by its context, which is the world...The dancer is the interpreter, is the text, is its context and is its representation in time and space, transcending both in performance (1995: 104).

Through this process, signs in some sense belong only to the moment, even though, in the cross-cultural nature of my contexts, they simultaneously represent a product of the collective past of bharatanatyam and of the dancer's own personal history. In combination, these infuse the performance with a timeless and intangible quality. Where cultural contexts are not bounded, it becomes a crucial quality, 'shared at a level beneath awareness' (Csordas 1989: 23). 'The meaning and "success" or "truth" of the text [performance] are not in its concepts, but in its gooseflesh' (Kersenboom 1995: 140). It is impossible and inappropriate to fully evaluate dance outwith the experiential and indefinite grounds that necessarily define it as utterly present and where emotion can distort time (cf. O'Flaherty 1984: 221-230). It is a process whereby, in Bourdieu's words:

the principle of the transformations and regulated revolutions which neither the extrinsic and instantaneous determinisms of a mechanistic sociology nor the purely internal but equally punctual determinism of voluntarist or spontaneist subjectivism are capable of accounting for (1977: 82).

With this awareness we can approach the experience of performing and watching dance—'form-in-the-making' (Sheets-Johnstone 1980: 36)—as a series of timeless moments, yet still in time. That it defies time with its presence recalls Peirce's assertion that the present represents 'that nascent state between the Determinate and the Indeterminate' (cited in Daniel 1996: 125). The determinacy of specific forms of abhinaya, for example, which belong to culture and history, are mediated by the presence of the dance and by the sign's capacity for 'différance'. Audiences gain different types of experiences watching bharatanatyam according to their levels of understanding, but all legitimately meaningful. Equally, the indeterminacy of individual emotional quality is also mediated, manifest in a communicative and present physical aesthetic form where 'signs are creative and open ended' (Lynch 1990: 20); simultaneous as collective and individual. This in turn encompasses Hughes-Freeland's discussion of consciousness in Javanese dance performance, where she also raises the question of 'whether dance is in or out of time' (1997b: 62). The connected paradoxical state is one in which the dancer and audience are

‘aware and not aware’ (Suryobrongto cited in Hughes-Freeland 1997b: 63), which I return to in the ensuing conclusion to the thesis. As Trawick observes:

‘The gods hate what is obvious,’ says a very old Indian proverb. ‘The gods love what is obscure.’ In India the sacred is obscure because it is beyond the capacity of any one mind to know it fully. It is intrinsically and paradoxically out of reach, both beyond and within (1990: 37).

Seeing dance as ‘a taste of the eternal’, therefore, is an appropriate evaluation of the processes at work, and of the way in which performing modern day bharatanatyam comfortably incorporates the atemporal nature of the devadasi’s ritual performance. It is a paradoxical process (Hughes-Freeland 1997b: 67)—never one thing or the other, and utterly dependent on the perspective of the individual viewer—and its existence relies on this characteristic in which the new paradoxes of performing dance in different environments are encompassed. It is a process that allows audiences to legitimately formulate a level of momentary response, without necessary recourse to the obvious history or culture of which dance is a part. Bharatanatyam as a dance form survives and encompasses change because of this ability to exist in the present and elicit varied levels of response. We believe dancers, then. It is, after all, the power of the dance.

Conclusion

Mangalam

*Dance of the triumphant
Silence*

*Serenity and Grace
Conquer
The chaos gently*

*And love always with mood
And music
Restores the balance
Which time transforms
Into forgotten moments —*

Ben Okri

In the closing pages of her book, *Veiled Sentiments*, Abu-Lughod turns her attention to the relationship between ideology and experience. She muses on the ways in which people connect their experiences with ideological forms, in particular oral poetic discourses, raising questions that I invoked in the introduction to this work. I use her observations as a starting point for this conclusion also. She writes:

[T]hese discourses are not templates, but rather languages that people can use to express themselves. In enabling people to express these experiences, these discourses may enable people to feel those experiences (1985: 258).

Defining poetry as art, she chooses not at that moment to ‘take up the formidable question[s]...of the relationship between art and individual experience’ (op. cit.). As a final conclusion, she suggests that poetry becomes a parallel narrative for experience, both necessary in and endorsed by, an ideological system which otherwise places too great a limit on experience. Poetry ‘reminds people of another way of being’ (ibid.: 259).

In this thesis, I *have* talked about the relationship between art and individual experience. It has not been a formidable endeavour, in that I have always felt it to be possible and worthwhile. Rather, it has been a creative and challenging one. It has been possible largely because of the particular art form that I have chosen to study. Both in its presentation, particularly within the learning process, and in its theoretical and philosophical roots, *bharatanatyam* has allowed me to talk about the experience of emotion in a structured and

coherent way. As a dance form, it is committed to the premise that emotion can—indeed should—be meaningfully shared and communicable. It is an artistic and embodied language for expression, which enables people to *feel* in certain ways.

In addition to enabling me to articulate definite ideas and approaches to understanding emotion, I suggest that this endeavour also enables anthropology to understand these same processes in other areas of social, cultural and individual life. I have suggested this with regard to particular *methodologies* which are useful in doing so, and to particular and additional aspects of *knowledge* which can be valued. We are introduced, in other words, to another way of being.

In contrast to Abu-Lughod's study, however, I have been concerned not with competing discourses within one ideological system, but with competing ideological systems which give rise to certain discourses. These systems are represented in my own work by those environments where bharatanatyam cannot be studied in the idealised holistic way encapsulated by gurukulam. As outlined in the introduction, these contexts are not identified as the difference between studying 'within India' and 'outside India'. They instead relate to certain conditions and lifestyle expectations present at different levels, and contingent on both context and individual. My own fieldwork, which allowed me to tap into these situations, is primarily focused on the experience of dancers who mainly work and study in the UK.¹ In many of these cases, an additional displacement initially exists as regards unfamiliarity with mythological and ritual imagery in the dance. Competing systems are not entirely related to place. As discussed in chapter two, they also concern contrasting attitudes to the learning process and the construction of meaningful knowledge. I have explored the ways in which individuals ostensibly committed to both systems in a practical, emotional and ideological sense, negotiate and understand their experience through the dance, and how this reflects in a sense of self.

This conclusion is a *mangalam*. It is a short auspicious offering at the end of a performance; a chance to thank and appreciate the audience, and a blessing and celebration of the dance. In it, I highlight aspects of transformational and transcendental processes that come into play during the negotiation of cultural forms, and which have re-occurred as underlying themes throughout the thesis. In doing so, I do not wish to highlight them as mutually exclusive

¹ I discussed this issue with Anusha, who keenly feels and openly discusses the difficulties of teaching bharatanatyam in these kinds of contexts. In our conversation referred to in the introduction, she expressed to me how for her, they are most obviously encapsulated by urban environments and lifestyles, whether here or in India.

processes, but to see them as overlapping categories of experience, and ones which relate to consciousness.

transforming

Anusha, of all my teachers, would talk most freely about the emotional content of the dance—cajoling us to bring expression into our dance, onto our faces, looking for changing shades of feeling across our eyes. In one class she spoke to us about expressing anger. Talking of her own experience, she said how she is much more able to feel and express anger now than she ever used to be, the implication in context being that this has come about through her dancing. She continued, saying that dancers must be able to express something about themselves, but also something that is not of themselves. ‘Perhaps you might even end up being able to express negative emotions that you wouldn’t normally want to associate with yourself.’

Marglin (1985) highlights aspects of both transforming and transcending in the dance with reference to the ritual role of the devadasi. Here, and intimated throughout the thesis, I use them as concepts to picture ways in which emotions are made and experienced. Looking to Anusha’s comments above, we have an immediate starting point. She moves from asking her students to express emotions in the dance according to their own experiences (see chapter four), to characterising her own emotional capacity in terms of the dance. Clearly, as I have argued, the relationship between ‘personal’ and ‘aesthetic’ emotion moves in both directions. ‘Dance escapes from nondance only to return to it in the course of symbolically transforming it, and dance analysis can only succeed by following this double movement, back and forth’ (Gell 1999a: 143).

We are allowed to view emotions as things that are subject to change; they may be manufactured according to social and cultural expectations in ways that are connected to form, movement and expression. In this way, they enter a field of experience. Articulating a similar framework in terms of exorcism rites, Kapferer argues: ‘through the manipulation of...mediating symbolic forms, the inner experience of the subjects can be made to parallel the transformations taking place in the objective structure of the rite’ (1991: 248).

Experience, as we have seen, does not always encompass a sense of personal self. The self is experienced as moving through various states of consciousness where aesthetic emotion is ideally ultimately unattached to self. In this sense it appears to be outside individual consciousness, yet mobilised in a process of extreme consciousness of body and emotion.

Emotion becomes conceptualised as unbounded and general, rather than exclusively individual and owned. Experience of emotion, however, *is* owned. Not in a way that leaves it subject only to speculation on behalf of the anthropologist, but in a way which makes it meaningful *as* experience, and which implicates it in a journey towards the meaningful knowledge described in chapter two. It is self-knowledge. Daniel defines the process towards self-knowledge as ‘synthetic’,² the goal of which is to ‘discover the self in the other or to know the self by getting to know in the other that which is also in the self’ (1984: 234). It stands in contrast to analytic knowledge, which focuses on knowing the self by *distinguishing* it from the other. We return to the ideas invoked in the Introduction of this work.

Daniel continues:

I believe that among the Tamils...the emphasis on and the awareness of synthetic knowledge cannot be missed; that it is valorised...cannot be denied. I believe this is so because of the central place that substance, in its transactability, transformability, and compatibility, occupies in Indian thought (ibid.: 235).

Emotion, as a path to knowledge in the form of *rasa*, can be usefully conceptualised as embracing South Indian notions of personhood in relation to substance. As we saw in chapter three, gurus and teacher implicitly recognise this in the way they discipline students’ bodies and emotions, scrutinising them for signs of change. Emotion, inter-connected with the bodily self, can be identified within the category of substance, and understood according to this model in the way that it both defines people, is defined by them, and is subject to change. Emotions become subject to these notions which help us to conceptualise how, through dancing, students experience a changed form of being. They move and feel in different ways.

There are two levels to this process. In performance, levels of transformation are dramatic and bounded, relating to aesthetic emotion and existing outside historical time in ways discussed in chapter five. The dancer ideally becomes a vehicle for generalised and aesthetic emotion through her enactment of myth, characterisation, imagery and beauty. These she shapes, but in their conception, they also shape her. On another level, therefore, aesthetic emotion and a moral code of learning, elicit another transformation, experienced as subtle and continuous with her sense of a ‘personal’ emotional self. This level moves beyond the

² For the connection Daniel makes between Tamilian synthetic/analytic models of knowledge and Peircean phenomenological categories, see chapter five, fn. 20

dance context, belongs to historical time, and is what drives Anusha to express a new manifestation of anger in herself. Equipped with these varying emotional levels the student finds her place as dancer.

Granting these two levels a relationship to one another helps us to formulate meanings with reference to the consciousness of experience. 'Partial' transformations in the dancer's sense of self, which includes, of course, her sense of body, cross a number of spheres in her life. Together with her own emotions, which are connected to her life history, they make up the moments of total transformation as she dances. But although they *inform* this transformation, as described in chapter four, the process is not always *felt* to happen in that way in certain moments of performing and dancing. Emotion becomes universal and communicable, and emotions become resonances in individuals rather than individual emotions. These processes free the student, not only to experience knowledge, but, with reference to Anusha's second observation, to express emotions with which they feel uncomfortable or do not personally identify with.

For this reason the term *abhinaya* is well-chosen: it is not the "expression" of one unique individual, but it is an offering of the affective power of a given content to an audience, gradually preparing their consciousness to receive the impression and turn it into a personalised, subjective interpretation (Kersenboom 1995: 140).

Dancer and audience map emotion onto the cultural structures of emotion taught in dance, and experience it at various levels of consciousness according to how practised, or how willingly they engage in this aspect of knowledge.

With performance situations varying so enormously, however, the dancer can now find herself responsible for creating the contexts which generate this particular knowledge. It again throws up the tension of being caught between worlds so often referred to (see chapters two and five). Attached to a process which displaces individual agency either to a guru, or to the dance ideal ('the dance'), being in a position to *use* it in a performance which relies on a dissolution of self, is paradoxical.³ We see dancers having to make choices and control performances in ways they deem appropriate; by tailoring dance items to meet audience needs, by talking about the mythical and emotional content, or simply by leaving the dance to exercise its 'magic'. Or, most usually, by any combination according to circumstances.

³ With parallels to my own work Hughes-Freeland talks about paradox in Javanese dance: 'The dancer's hermitic state is to be "empty but full"...Paradox, I would hazard, is a prerequisite for continuing existence' (1997b: 67).

Chapter five discussed the practical and theoretical processes implied by these strategies, and the inherent creativity of paradox where ‘patterns of ambiguity’ (Trawick 1990: 242) are a central premise. O’Flaherty echoes this in her discussion of Hindu texts and mythology which are ‘troubled by contradiction’. She continues: ‘But they do not ultimately iron out the contradictions; they alter their definitions of reality in order to let the contradictions survive intact’ (1984: 11). They are creative, in other words, with reality. Not only in the way that dancers must be, but in the way that I approach my work anthropologically also.

Returning to the opening comments by Abu-Lughod helps us to identify all these changes as part of the creative ideal inherent within artistic forms. Despite being a prescriptive discipline, bharatanatyam also promotes a creative response from individual dancers where universal emotions, often presented in very stereotypical or clichéd terms (‘imagine how lovers look—all dewy-eyed!’), resonate and formulate the experience of emotion. Despite being a prescriptive form, it feels like a creative experience. ‘The constraining physical practice is the prerequisite for a liberation of the imagining spirit’ (Hughes-Freeland 1997b: 61). At the same time, emotions are connected to an emerging moral sensibility in the dancer. As part of the training process, teachers manage their student’s emotional lives, particularly in terms of ego.

Inevitably, however, I have suggested that at times these processes also generate a sense of tension in students, intensified by studying in displaced environments which cannot always accommodate the levels of total commitment commanded by dance training. Tension is not always accounted for in these terms, but can be identified instead as a failure or shortcoming in the student’s character or capacity for the dance. Although it can impinge on the student’s sense of well being both within and outside the dance, mechanisms exist that render it manageable. The student harnesses tensions for use in an aesthetic emotional palette, whilst at the same time developing an imaginative sense of being which can resolve them. This quality in itself is crucial to experiencing the dance in a meaningful way. Moments of tension, then, are also creative moments.

transcending and consciousness

Imaginative responses connect the dance student to both transformative and transcendental processes. A felt quality of transcendence occupies a space within bharatanatyam in a number of ways⁴ helping us uncover meanings both in relation to self, and to ‘alternative’

⁴ Here, I talk about transcendence as a *quality* of experience. Elsewhere, in Turner’s analysis of ritual liminal structures, for example (1969), transcendence has been discussed in categorical terms. This is

aspect of consciousness (cf. Cohen & Rapport 1995). It represents an important aspect of the emotional body, related to awareness, consciousness, control, and ultimately, to beauty. We can associate it not only with experience and identity, but with trends in Hindu philosophy which point to merging dual aspects of the cosmos evident in the dance (see chapter two). Marglin (1985) identifies this aspect in reference to the auspicious-inauspicious opposition, which furthers our argument by illustrating how this opposition exemplifies a 'transformative principle' (ibid.: 298). Further, understanding qualities of transcendence relies on appreciating the fluid nature of the self as it moves through the world, and on valuing of particular ways of knowing connected to bodily experience outlined in chapter two. Csordas identifies the irreducible quality of this experience in relation to the lived body as 'the existential ground of culture and the sacred' (1989: 23), or in Heidegger's words, 'the relationship between being and Being' (1974 [1956]: 57).

An idealised quality, it is nonetheless also underpinned with a moral code. Consider Hughes-Freeland writing about Javanese dance:

The theory of performance under discussion centres on the axiom that performed movement is a form of self-control which constitutes a sociologically particular Javanese version of the way of knowing oneself and others; in other words, it refers to a sense of consciousness formulated as an aesthetic morality (1997b: 55).

Layers of transcendence in a dancer's experience are attached to time, context and to historical moments in the same way that layers of transformation exist—either as total and isolated or partial and continuous. To uncover these same trends, we can look to feelings associated with transcending some aspect of self in regard to consciousness. In what ways do transcending qualities in dance define consciousness? Do they, in fact, preclude consciousness in the sense of transcending consciousness itself?

Throughout the thesis we see how a dancer develops a strategy of transcendence during her learning process, whether in moments of tension, or constraint, or emotional stress, or in moments of learning, when she needs to understand something outside her immediate life experience. She partially removes herself from—transcends—the historical moment in order to create—to imagine—a new moment, which is then reintroduced into historical time. She returns with a newly imagined feeling, or performed image, or quality of understanding, or with a reaffirmed relationship with the dance as arbiter in, for example, an uneasy

not to say, of course, that the two are unrelated, as Turner himself demonstrates in his interest in experiential processes (1985).

relationship with a teacher or a performance set-up. 'Because they can imagine, human beings are transcendently free' (Rapport 1997: 34). In the process, she learns a quality of detachment that integrates with her sense of self and may be present in contexts outside dance.

This quality is of value to her in realising her dancing. Dance provides her with a retreat into another consciousness, and though it may serve her immediate circumstance, it actually serves the grander purpose of generating understanding. It is, in other words, an invaluable aspect of knowledge. The sense of a 'double life' so often referred to in the modern dancer's experience is also overcome in this moment. We can once again, if we like, frame this rationalising concept as one that reflects the oppositional nature of the Hindu cosmos and embraces Marglin's work (1985, 1990). The dual aspect is a necessary and ultimately creative concept where opposites come together in auspicious circumstances.

Further, it is a quality bound to a sense of body and movement. Lynch gives us an important parallel, where the Hindu pilgrim 'does not try to transcend the natural and profane to reach the supernatural and the sacred. Rather, he tries to experience more correctly that the natural, the profane and the self *are* the supernatural, the sacred and the divine' (1990: 191). This experience itself, I suggest, can be expressed in terms of transcending without implying the former assumption. It is the concentrated awareness of bodily movement, the physical struggle and the control, that allow consciousness to shift to a meta level, and all of which bring serenity and grace to physical and emotional expression.

It is not a feeling that exists for all dancers every time they dance, particularly in earlier stages of training. It is an idea and an ideal, and many times remains only partial and subtle; glimpses of feeling in fleeting moments. In the smallest of ways, though, dance teachers constantly remind students of this possibility at every level of their training. In a flippant (rhetorical) comment, and usually when teaching a particularly tricky movement, they will call out with a wicked smile: 'It's easy, isn't it?!' This seemingly insignificant device implies another level. Without trying, the dancer has to establish a feeling of dynamic ease—a transcendental point. She has to reach a quietude in complex rhythmical passages, or in flections of expression which are precise yet personally enhanced; to find a stillness and balance in a posture, perhaps Siva Nataraja, his leg raised; to feel a sense of utter unity with the sound of the nattuvangam, or with the tala chimed on the tiny cymbals.

So as the dance takes a communicative role in performance, this well-practised state of transcendence once again eschews the sense of self which otherwise leaves the dancer, and

thereby the dance, bounded. Bodies and selves cannot be bounded, but must rather be controlled. Consciousness, therefore, *is* part of the transcendental state, because it acts as the controlling baseline so necessary to the dance's auspicious status. In these moments, as described in chapter five, time is suspended. This consciousness, however, does not belong entirely to a state of mind—the 'cognition' which Gell (1998: 228) equates with consciousness. Let us refer once more to Javanese dance where '[b]eing Javanese is not an arcane and secret state, but something visible and evident; dancing is a significant means of embodying consciousness in the Javanese way' (Hughes-Freeland 1997b: 57). Similarly in bharatanatyam, the mind enjoins a state of body, a state of the senses, and a state of the emotions. These aspects of the self possess a consciousness of their own, appropriately described by Bateson (1972) in terms of 'grace'. 'It is not muscle which dances, but consciousness' (Hughes-Freeland 1997b: 61). But at the same time muscles—bodies—*have* consciousness, which allow consciousness to exist beneath awareness. In chapter two I referred to this state as meta-consciousness. Ultimately, it is an appeal to beauty.

In this thesis, I have tried to pick up on and value these connections. I have tried to direct the reader to a place in the imagination which can create a felt sense of knowledge and emotions. I have explained the ways in which we can make connections to and with individual experience via cultural forms. In this way, emotion, a concept so crucially associated with individual experience, can be shared, learned, transform and be transformed. It becomes less attached to an unknowable and bounded sense of being, than to an invaluable part of knowing as being. Conceptualising emotions as both owned and shared becomes an important and possible part of the anthropological project. Restores the balance.

BOOK TWO

Opening Comments

What is to follow in Book Two is largely anticipated in the Introduction to the thesis in terms of why and how the contents of Book Two exist, in what ways it relates to Book One and to the thematic interests of my work as a whole. It exists in a way that is as necessary as Book One. This short preliminary is to lead the reader into the poetry itself. I write it somewhat reluctantly, in the same way that I give explanations before dance performances somewhat reluctantly. But in the same way as explanations find their place, I trust it will provide a framework with which to approach the poems, but which at the same time, the poems—as poetry—necessarily transcend in many respects.

The poetry here is not ‘about dance’ in anything but the most indirect ways. It is not, in other words, intended to be an alternative descriptive device. Instead, it is intended to mirror dance in its appeal to emotion, and through this, invite a particular kind of knowledge and a particular approach to understanding and to using text. The reader is asked to value those parts of themselves that are emotional, creative and imaginative, and which actively engage with a text in a collaborative act of meaning. In this way, the visual aspect of Book Two is also poetry.

The poems here reflect certain emotional dramas or moments, or try to capture certain moods and ideas. They especially, but not exclusively, draw on particular *nayikas* in order to express the emotion of love—of *sringara rasa* as the baseline of aesthetic emotion, but also of other aspects of love explored by *bharatanatyam*. They use mythological, poetic and symbolic imagery found in the dance, but also draw on imagery found in *bhakti* poetry (cf. Ramanujan 1973). They invoke a sense of the imagined dance context which is closely related to ritual and temple life. Finally, they inevitably draw on personal imagery and style, and thereby begin to reflect the kinds of processes through which personal emotion becomes attached to aesthetic emotion, in such a way that gives it a felt content, but also a communicative one. Because of its place in poetry, then, and in poetry as art, the personal is not bounded in any respect, and can most fully emerge in different and shared layers of consciousness.

At the south end of the tank
Leaning along the long
Flat stretch of the temple wall,
Men sit like sculptures,
Their forms carved and rounded
In the afternoon sun.

(I try to pretend I have not noticed the woman
With the turmeric-yellow face
Who beckons me; flapping her hand
Like a bird's wing
Sharp and insistent.)

Right inside, a strong smell of smoke and incense.
Oil lamps burn with small flames
Like petals. The priests are
Distant in the shrine. Alight
With the yellow glow of action,
Their movements graceful and liquid.

Around me, the rhythm of fingers playing
Against cheeks, foreheads, lips;
Eyes fixed on the deity (peeping out).
The man beside us farts noisily.
Two young women, hair oiled, enter quickly.
Kneel. Mark of vermilion on stone.

(Now, if you walk down the steps,
Clockwise, you will pass the sun and the moon.
You will be drawn by the smell of sandal
To a small golden double door,
Luminous with mystery.)



Reflection (I)

It was night
When she stole into the garden.

The stone walls of the temple
Concealed a kind of paradise.
Branches, lifting and
Arching, picked out in the moonlight.
She, secret in the dark folds of her
Clothing, picking her way between the creepers
In sweet anticipation.

Scent of jasmine
Heavy in the air.

Soft and low you called to her.
Turning, she is almost shy.
Wonderful hesitation.
Still, breathing, you do not notice
The threads, freshly torn
From a spider's web
Are turning to gold in her hair.

Reflection (II)

Do you remember when we stole
Into that garden?

With supposed nonchalance,
Defied by our hearts' beating,
We strolled past the film crew
Into, we knew,
A kind of Eden.

Clambered down unlikely terraces
Which belonged not here, in England;
Excited, fearful of discovery,
Impostors in this sweet scene.

Yet impostors we were not.
Dropping down behind the wall
Scaly with lichen, grey
And dusty on our fingers,
We were suddenly, and faintly
In a familiar place.

Scent of roses.
Background to our fragrant need.
The stone, warm on my back;
The summer grasses, their pointy ends, dry and green,
Scattering seeds.

A serenade of distant voices.
Or is it only the bees?



Sonnet cxiii

I

The white paper is delicate with love.
Wrapped in brown paper it is
Passed from your hand to mine,
A valentine for everyday
(From tomorrow)
You are away from me.

I am a white figure on the platform.
My grief—my disbelief—pales around me
As I sit on the concrete bench
With your words in my hands,
Their meaning reflected in tears;
A blurred testament to your departure.

II

These days do not exist
Except in length.
They pass in dreams and memories;
Thoughts that take shape like sunlight on a golden roof,
Their bright outlines dissolving into sky.

But fingering the paper is touching your skin.
Opening it again and again,
(It always sticks a little)
I mark my fragile days; diminishing time
With the texture of your words.

Rain falls like diamonds across the doorway.
Either I am caught in the room
Or in my skin
Or by her pleading me not to
Speak, or act, or protect.

The boat is drifting
The red deluge
Is white and angry.

Could she not tell?
The diamonds were blue.
It was not a swan she saw.
So when she followed, through the doorway,
She was like a lamb to the slaughter.

Lovebird. Seeing it all.
Waiting for a sign
To weigh anchor.



Messenger

Dark clouds sweep across the sky like dust.
Reflected in the window
(Where I am waiting for you)
I can see my lips; full, red, receiving.
I can see my eyes, carefully outlined.
I can smell the perfume,
Tangled in my hair like flowers.

If I were to send the cuckoo,
Flying across the meadows,
Wings grey as the path she is weaving through tenements.
If I were to send her,
Would she find you, cleaving and guilty,
Bearing the red mark of another lover,
Dark and unmistakable?

I came to you first
Offering pineapple;
And in its fibres, yellow and milky,
A sweetness born.

Later, walking back together
Our saris low on our ankles
The heat of flagstones on our feet,
Bearing fruit.

The simplicity and joy
Of tasting a tangerine
Finding you there, under my skin
Like pure colour.

Nayika (I): Magdalen



Sabdam

Against the soft skin of her breast.
He rests a cheek. Turns,
Takes her in,
Lips eager and open.

And in their meeting,
Fragrant and round in his mouth,
He knows she belongs
To him.

She belongs to him.
Enraptured by his tiny
Insistent tongue. His skin
Delicate to an almost translucent

Blue.
Come! Let me amuse you.
Cajole you with brightly coloured kisses
To smile.

He smiles.
Wide open jaw,
And it is as if he holds
The whole universe in his throat.

She, almost afraid of the chaos she sees
Stretching down to his gullet.
The undulating underlying
Potential

In the child lying
Nestled, his fist,
Fluted and jewel-like
Clutching her breast.



Garuda

The bell has been ringing for hours.
The vast bell, as big as an elephant,
Tolled by one man. Sweat from his back
Incessant as his will
To toll the bell.

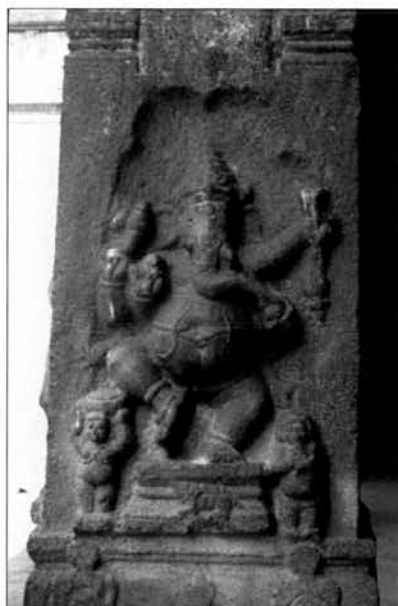
Somewhere in the lost spaces between pillars
Cymbals are clanging constantly.
A man on the north gopuram is raising a flag.
A tiny figure
Clinging to the gods.

Like an eagle, he watches the scene.
The temple awash with people.
At the centre of his vision a woman in a green sari,
Securely held in bodies which
Resound with the tolling bell.

He senses her sudden alertness,
An arrow poised at her back.
He realises she is not a woman, but a deer,
Fearful that the forest, the protecting canopy,
Conceals her enemy.

Despite her darting, the hunter traps her
Almost mad with the desire to strike
Her side. For a moment, deep in her memory,
The deer sees a woman in green confined in a room
With blood on her thigh.

The eagle flies skyward, borne
By the sound of the bell tolling.



On the clear water of her presence
Floats a golden lotus.
I, a distant child, reach
Forward, gently take a droplet
From its open petals, and drink.

Taste it sweet
Like sunshine dancing on honey.



Substance: Essence

After that moment:
The fluttering wings of a butterfly
The huge wave—crested, graceful—
Pain and joy rising like foam.
Anticipate

After all that,
Warm and peaceful.



Grace

Your body
Is a landscape.

Draw patiently around
The contours of form.

Sense the line
Moving through mountains
And undulations.
A stream of consciousness
Caressing skin
With vision.

Find, with wonder,
The poetry there.

Selected glossary of dance terms

<i>abhinaya</i>	- mime, expression.
<i>adavū</i>	- basic unit of dance, exercise.
<i>alārippu</i>	- first dance in bharatanatyam repertoire; a nritya item.
<i>aramandi</i>	- 'half-sitting' position; basic bharatanatyam stance.
<i>araṅgeṭram</i>	- debut performance.
<i>asamyuṭa hasta</i>	- single hand gestures.
<i>bhakti</i>	- devotion; loving devotion to a deity.
<i>bhāratanaṭyam</i>	- classical dance form of South India..
<i>bhāva</i>	- expression; different emotional states.
<i>catir kaccheri</i>	- early dance concert performed in court.
<i>chaari; cāri</i>	- foot movements.
<i>darśan</i>	- showing, seeing, perception; visiting temple in order to see and be seen by a deity
<i>dāsi</i>	- see <i>devadasi</i>
<i>dāsi aṭṭam (sadir)</i>	- temple dance of the <i>devadasis</i>
<i>devadāsi</i>	- 'female servant of the deity'; temple servants.
<i>devī</i>	- goddess; refers to all goddesses and to the one great goddess.
<i>Durgā</i>	- fierce form of the goddess.
<i>Ganesha</i>	- elephant-headed god, first son of Siva.
<i>gurukulam</i>	- guru's household; system of teaching associated with guru.
<i>hastakshetra</i>	- position of hands in an adavu.
<i>jāti</i>	- an adavu consisting of each of the five basic time cycles.
<i>jati</i>	- combinations of rhythmic patterns in three speeds.
<i>jatiswaram</i>	- <i>nritya</i> item in dance repertoire using a combinations of <i>jatis</i> .
<i>karanā</i>	- dance movement of feet and hands described in the <i>Natyasastra</i> ; 108 postures depicted in carvings on the temple <i>gopurams</i> in Chidambaram.
<i>kathakali</i>	- dance-drama from Kerala.
<i>lāsya</i>	- graceful and feminine movements, opposite of <i>tandava</i> .
<i>mangalam</i>	- auspicious; very short finale at end of dance concert.
<i>mūrti</i>	- form, likeness. Image of the deity.
<i>mridangam</i>	- double-sided drum.
<i>mudrā (hasta)</i>	- hand gesture.
<i>namaskar</i>	- greeting; opening movement.
<i>Naṭarāja</i>	- form of Siva as lord of the dance.
<i>Nāṭyaśāstra</i>	- ancient text outlining the dramatic arts.
<i>naṭṭuvaṇār</i>	- musician who conducts the dance using <i>nattuvangam</i> .
<i>naṭṭuvangam</i>	- the art of singing dance rhythms and playing the cymbals.
<i>nāṭya</i>	- dramatic contents of the dance.
<i>nāyaka</i>	- romantic hero.
<i>nāyikā</i>	- heroine; romantic concept of the beloved.
<i>nritya, nritya</i>	- abstract/pure dance.
<i>nritya hasta</i>	- hand gestures used in performing <i>nritya</i> .
<i>nritya, nritya</i>	- danced expression through <i>abhinaya</i> and pure dance.
<i>odissi</i>	- classical dance from the state of Orissa.
<i>padam</i>	- dance item/devotional song often expressing <i>sringara</i>
<i>poṭṭu</i>	- auspicious vermilion mark worn by (not widowed) Hindu women on the forehead between the eyes.

<i>pūjā</i>	- worship, often consisting of particular offerings.
<i>pushpanjali, puṣpāñjali</i>	- opening dance item offering flowers.
<i>rāga</i>	- melody.
<i>rasa</i>	- juice, flavour, essence; mood, sentiment; aesthetic emotion.
<i>śabdam</i>	- expressive dance composition
<i>samyuṭa hasta</i>	- double hand gesture.
<i>sancāri bhāva</i>	- transitory emotional states.
<i>śāstra</i>	- treatise, teachings.
<i>śiṣya</i>	- disciple; student.
<i>Śiva</i>	- great Hindu deity.
<i>sringara ; śṛṅgāra</i>	- <i>rasa</i> of love, the most important <i>rasa</i> .; love mood incorporating romantic and erotic love; divine bliss.
<i>sthāyi bhāvas</i>	- dominant/permanent emotional states.
<i>tāla</i>	- rhythm.
<i>tāṇḍava</i>	- powerful masculine dance movements; opposite of <i>lasya</i> .
<i>tillāna</i>	- joyful dance item using predominantly <i>nrīta</i> .
<i>varṇam</i>	- central item in dance repertoire requiring skill in both <i>nrīta</i> and <i>abhinaya</i> .
<i>vyabhicāri bhāva</i>	- transitory emotional states.

Bibliography

- Abu-Lughod, Lila. 1986. *Veiled Sentiments: Honour and Poetry in a Bedouin Society*. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- 1990. 'The Romance of Resistance: Tracing Transformations of Power through Bedouin Women.' In P. Reeves Sanday and R. G. Goodenough (eds.), *Beyond the Second Sex*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Abu-Lughod, Lila and Lutz, Catherine A. (eds.). 1990. *Affecting Discourse: Language and the Politics of Emotion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Alter, Joseph S. 1992. *The Wrestler's Body: Identity and Ideology in North India*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Appadurai, Arjun. 1990. 'Topographies of the Self: Praise and Emotion in Hindu India.' In L. Abu-Lughod, and C. A. Lutz (eds.). 1990. *Affecting Discourse: Language and the Politics of Emotion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Babb, Lawrence A. 1970. 'Marriage and Malevolence: The Uses of Sexual Opposition in the Hindu Pantheon.' *Ethnology* 9:137-148.
- Balasaraswati, T. 1980. Bharata Natyam (edited version of the author's Presidential address to the Tamil Isai Sangam Annual Conference, Dec. 1975). In Prof. V. Subramaniam (ed.), *The Sacred and the Secular in India's Performing Arts*. New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House.
- Banks, Marcus. 'Aesthetics is a cross-cultural category' (The Debate). In T. Ingold (ed.), *Key Debates in Anthropology*. New York: Routledge.
- Barth, Fredrick. 1975. *Ritual and Knowledge among the Baktaman of New Guinea*. New Haven: Yale University Press; Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- 1990. 'The Guru and the Conjurer: Transactions in Knowledge and the Shaping of Culture in Southeast Asia and Melanesia.' In *Man* 25: 640-653.
- Bateson, Gregory. 1972. *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. Aylesbury: Chandler Publishing Company.
- Beck, Brenda E.F. 1976. 'The Symbolic Merger of Body, Space and Cosmos in Hindu Tamil Nadu.' In *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 10: 213-243.
- Beeman, William O. 1993. 'The Anthropology of Theatre and Spectacle.' In *Annual Review of Anthropology* 22: 369-93.
- Blacking, John (ed.). 1977. *The Anthropology of the Body*. ASA monograph. London: Academic Press.
- Bloch, Maurice. 1990. 'Language, Anthropology and Cognitive Science.' In *Man* 26: 183-198.

- Born, Georgina. 'Aesthetics is a cross-cultural category' (The Debate). In T. Ingold (ed.), *Key Debates in Anthropology*. New York: Routledge.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London: Routledge.
- Brenneis, Donald. 1990. 'Shared and Solitary Sentiments.' In L. Abu-Lughod and C.A. Lutz (eds.), 1990. *Affecting Discourse: Language and the Politics of Emotion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Briggs, Jean L. 1970. *Never in Anger: Portrait of an Eskimo Family*. Cambridge, Massachusetts & London: Harvard University Press.
- Brown, John Russell. 1998. 'Theatrical Pillage in Asia: Redirecting the Intercultural Traffic.' In *New Theatre Quarterly* Vol XIX, part 1, no 53: 9-19.
- Buck, David C. 1983. 'Siddhanta: Siddha and Siva,' in F. Clothey and B.J.Long (eds.), *Experiencing Siva: Encounters with a Hindu Deity*. New Delhi: Manohar.
- Burghart, Richard and Cantlie, Audrey (eds.), *Indian Religion*. London: Curzon.
- Burton, P., Dyson K. K. & Ardener, S. (eds.), *Bilingual Women*. Oxford: Berg Publishers.
- Chandra, Vikram. 1995. *Red Earth and Pouring Rain*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Clifford, James. 1983. 'On Ethnographic Authority.' In *Representations* 1:2: 118-146.
- Clothey, Fred W. and Long, Bruce J., (eds.). 1983. *Experiencing Siva: Encounters with a Hindu Deity*. New Delhi: Manohar.
- Cohen, Anthony. 1994. *Self-Consciousness: An Alternative Anthropology of Identity*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Cohen, Anthony & Rapport, Nigel (eds.). 1995. 'Introduction.' In *Questions of Consciousness*. London: Routledge.
- Coomaraswamy, Ananda. 1918. *The Dance of Siva: Fourteen Indian Essays*. London: Sunrise Press.
- 1936 [1917]. *The Mirror of Gesture*. Being the Abhinaya Darpana of Nandikesvara (trans. with Duggirala Gopalakrishnayya). New York: Harvard University Press.
- Coomaraswamy, Ananda and The Sister Nivedita. 1967 (1913). *Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists*. New York: Dover Publications Inc.
- Coote, Jeremy. 1992. '“Marvels of Everyday Vision” : The Anthropology of Aesthetics and the Cattle-Keeping Nilotes.' In J. Coote & A. Shelton (eds.), *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Coote, Jeremy and Shelton, Anthony (eds.). 1992. *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Corin, Ellen. 1998. 'Refiguring the Person: the Dynamics of Affects and Symbols in an African Spirit Possession Cult.' In M. Lambek & A. Strathern (eds.) *Bodies and Persons: Comparative Perspectives from Africa and Melanesia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cort, John. 1995. 'Svetambar Murtipujak Jain Scripture in a Performative Context.' In J. Timm (ed.) *Texts in Context: Traditional Hermeneutics in South Asia*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Cowan, Jane K. 1990. *Dance and the Body Politic in Northern Greece*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Crapanzano, Vincent. 1980. *Tuhami: Portrait of a Moroccan*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Csordas, Thomas J. 1989 'Embodiment as a Paradigm for Anthropology.' In *Ethos*, vol.18 (1): 5-47.
- 1993. 'Somatic Modes of Attention.' In *Cultural Anthropology* 8: 135-56.
- 1994. *Embodiment and Experience: The Existential Ground of Culture and Self*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Daniel, E. Valentine. 1984. *Fluid Signs: Being a Person the Tamil Way*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- 1996. *Charred Lullabies: Chapters in a Anthropography of Violence*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Das, Veena. 1985. 'Paradigms of Body Symbolism: an Analysis of Selected Themes in Hindu Culture. In R. Burghart and A. Cantlie (eds.), *Indian Religion*. London: Curzon.
- Daumal, Rene. 1982 [1972]. *Rasa: Knowledge of the Self* (trans. Louise Landes Levi). New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation.
- Davis, Richard, H. 1991. *Ritual in an Oscillating Universe: Worshipping Siva in Medieval India*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Deekshithar, R.N.N. 1997. *The Hidden Treasure in the City of Ether*. Published by the author.
- di Leonardo, Micaela (ed.). 1991. *Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge: Feminist Anthropology in the Postmodern Era*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Dirks, Nicholas B. 1987. *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Douglas, Mary. 1970. *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology*. New York: Pantheon Books.

- Drewal, Margaret Thompson. 1992. *Yoruba Ritual: Performers, Play, Agency*. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Dumont, Louis. 1980 [1970]. *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Eck, Diana. 1985. *Darsan: Seeing the Divine Image in India*. Pennsylvania: Anima Books.
- Eikelman, Dale F. 1978. 'The Art of Meaning: Islamic Education and its Social Reproduction.' *Comparative Studies in History* 20, no. 4: 485-516.
- Fabian, Johannes. 1990. *Power and Performance: Ethnographic Explorations through Proverbial Wisdom and Theater in Shaba, Zaire*. Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Fardon, Richard (ed.). 1995. *Counterworks: Managing the Diversity of Knowledge*. London: Routledge.
- Feher, M. 1989. 'Introduction.' In Feher et al (eds.), *Fragments for a History of the Human Body* (vol. 1). New York: Zone.
- Feld, Steven. 1982. *Sound and Sentiment: Birds, Weeping, Poetics and Song in Kaluli Expression*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Finnegan, Ruth. 1977. *Oral Poetry: Its Nature, Significance and Social Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Foucault, Michel. 1977. *Discipline and Punish*. London: Penguin.
- 1978. *The History of Sexuality. Vol. 1: An Introduction*. New York: Random House.
- 1982. 'The Subject and Power.' In H. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow (eds.), *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Fraleigh, Sondra Horton. 1993. 'Good Intentions and Dancing Moments: Agency, Freedom and Self-Knowledge in Dance.' In Ulric Neisser (ed.) *The Perceived Self*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fuller, C. J. 1992: *The Camphor Flame: Popular Hinduism and Society in India*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Gal, Susan. 1991. 'Between Speech and Silence: The Problematics of Research on Language and Gender.' In M. di Leonardo (ed.), *Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge: Feminist Anthropology in the Postmodern Era*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Gaston, Anne-Marie. 1980. 'The Place of Indian Classical Dance in Traditional Indian Culture.' In Prof. V. Subramaniam (ed.), *The Sacred and the Secular in India's Performing Arts: Ananda K. Coomaraswamy Centenary Essays*. New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House.
- 1991. 'Dance and the Hindu Woman: Bharatanatyam Re-ritualised.' In J. Leslie (ed.), *Roles and Rituals for Hindu Women*. London: Pinters Publishers.

- 1996. *Bharata Natyam: From Temple to Theatre*. Delhi: Manohar.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- 1984. ‘“From the Native’s Point of View”’: On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding. In R.A. Shweder and R.A. LeVine (eds.), *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self, and Emotion*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Gell, Alfred. 1992. ‘The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology.’ In J. Coote and A. Shelton (eds.), *Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 1998. *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- 1999a. ‘Style and Meaning in Umeda Dance.’ In Eric Hirsch (ed.) *The Art of Anthropology: Essays and Diagrams*. London: Athlone Press.
- 1999b. ‘On Coote’s “Marvels of Everyday Vision”’. In Eric Hirsch (ed.) *The Art of Anthropology: Essays and Diagrams*. London: Athlone Press.
- Ghosh, Manomohan (ed. & trans.). 1957. *Nandikesvara’s Abhinayadarpanam: A Manual of Gesture and Posture used in Hindu Dance and Drama*. Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay.
- Ghosh, Sushmita. 1999. ‘The End...of a Beginning.’ In *Extradition*, autumn edition: 18-19.
- Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Good, Anthony. 1991. *The Female Bridegroom: A Comparative Study of Life Crisis Rituals in South India and Sri Lanka*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- 2000. ‘Congealing Divinity: Time, Worship and Kinship in South Indian Hinduism.’ In *JRAI* vol. 6, no. 2: 273-292.
- Gorringe, Magdalen. 1999. ‘Contemporising a Classical Art Form.’ In *Extradition*, autumn edition: 24-25.
- Gow, Peter. 1996. ‘Aesthetics is a cross-cultural category’ (Against the motion (2)). In T. Ingold (ed.), *Key Debates in Anthropology*. New York: Routledge.
- 1999. ‘Piro Designs: Painting as Meaningful Action in an Amazonian Lived World.’ In *JRAI* vol. 5, no. 2: 229-246.
- Green, Thomas A. 1977. ‘Comments’ following article by Denis Dutton ‘Art, Behaviour, and the Anthropologist.’ In *Current Anthropology* Vol. 18, No. 3: 387-407.
- Grimshaw, Anna. 1999. ‘The End in the Beginning: New Year at Hizong (the Himalayas).’ In C.W. Watson (ed.), *Being There: Fieldwork in Anthropology*. London: Pluto Press

- Gupta, Sanjukta. 1991. 'Women in the Saiva/Sakta Ethos.' In J. Leslie (ed.), *Roles and Rituals for Hindu Women*. London: Pinters Publishers.
- Hanna, Judith Lynne. 1988. *Dance, Sex and Gender: Signs of Identity, Dominance, Defiance, and Desire*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Harvey, Penny. 1994. 'The Presence and Absence of Speech in the Communication of Gender.' In P. Burton, K. K. Dyson & S. Ardener (eds.), *Bilingual Women*. Oxford: Berg Publishers.
- Hastrup, Kirsten. 1994. 'Anthropological Knowledge Incorporated: Discussion.' In K. Hastrup & P. Hervik (eds.), *Social Experience and Anthropological Knowledge*. London: Routledge
- Hastrup, Kirsten & Hervik, Peter (eds.). 1994. 'Introduction.' *Social Experience and Anthropological Knowledge*. London: Routledge
- Heidegger, Martin (trans. Peter D. Hertz). 1971. *On the Way to Language*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers.
- 1974 [1956]. *The Question of Being*. London: Vision Press.
- Herzfeld, Michael. 1995. 'It takes one to know one: collective resentment and mutual recognition among Greeks in local and global contexts. In R. Fardon (ed.). *Counterworks: Managing the Diversity of Knowledge*. London: Routledge.
- Hughes-Freeland, Felicia. 1997a. 'Art and Politics: From Javanese Court Dance to Indonesian Art.' In *Man* vol. 3 no. 3: 473-495.
- 1997b. 'Consciousness in Performance: A Javanese Theory.' In *Social Anthropology* 5 no. 1: 55-68.
- Hutchins, Edwin. 1980. *Culture and Inference*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Inden, Ronald. 1986. 'Orientalist Constructions of India.' In *Modern Asian Studies* 20: 401-446.
- Ingold, Tim (ed.). 1996. *Key Debates in Anthropology*. New York: Routledge.
- Iyer, Alessandra. 1999. 'Computer Graphic Reconstruction of 9th Century Javanese Dance Forms: An Overview of the Problems Encountered.' Paper given at conference on dance, University of Surrey, April 1999.
- Jackson, Michael. 1989. *Paths Towards a Clearing: Radical Empiricism and Ethnographic Enquiry*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- 1996. 'Introduction.' In M. Jackson (ed.), *Things As They Are: New Directions in Phenomenological Anthropology*. Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- 1998. *Minima Ethnographica: Intersubjectivity and the Anthropological Project*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press.

- Johnson, Mark. 1987. *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press.
- 1991. 'The Imaginative basis of Meaning and Cognition.' In S. Kulcher and W. Melion (eds.) *Images of Memory*. Smithsonian Institute.
- Kapferer, Bruce. 1991 [1983]. *A Celebration of Demons: Exorcism and the Aesthetics of Healing in Sri Lanka*. Oxford: Smithsonian Institute Press.
- 1997. *The Feast of the Sorcerer: Practices of Consciousness and Power*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Kapur, Anuradha. 1985. 'Actors, Pilgrims, Kings and Gods: The Ramlila at Ramnagar.' In *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 19: 57-74.
- Kersenboom, Saskia. 1991. 'The Traditional Repertoire of the Tiruttani Temple Dancers.' In J. Leslie (ed.), *Roles and Rituals for Hindu Women*. London: Pinters Publishers.
- 1995. *Word, Sound, Image: The Life of the Tamil Text*. Oxford: Berg.
- Khoo, Mavin. 1999. *Warna: Colours of Bharatanatyam* (Programme notes).
- Kulcher, S. and Melion, W. (eds.). 1991. *Images of Memory*. Smithsonian Institute.
- Lambek, Michael. 1998. 'Body and mind in mind, body and mind in body: some anthropological interventions in a long conversation.' In M. Lambek & A. Strathern (eds.), *Bodies and Persons: Comparative Perspectives from Africa and Melanesia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lambek, Michael & Strathern, Andrew (eds.). 1998. *Bodies and Persons: Comparative Perspectives from Africa and Melanesia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lave, Jean & Wenger, Etienne. 1991. *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Layton, Robert. 1981. *The Anthropology of Art*. St. Albans: Granada Publishing.
- Leavitt, John. 1996. 'Meaning and Feeling in the Anthropology of Emotion.' In *American Ethnologist* 23 (3): 514-539.
- Leslie, Julia (ed.). 1991. *Roles and Rituals for Hindu Women*. London: Pinters Publishers.
- Levi-Strauss, C. 1969 [1962]. *Totemism*. London: Merlin.
- Levy, Robert I. 1984. 'Emotion, Knowing and Culture.' In R.A. Shweder and R.A. LeVine (eds.), *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self, and Emotion*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Lock, Margaret. 1993. 'Cultivating the Body: Anthropology and the Epistemologies of Bodily practice and Knowledge.' In *Annual Review of Anthropology* 22: 133-55.

- Lutz, Catherine. 1988. *Unnatural Emotions: Everyday Sentiments on a Micronesian Atoll and Their Challenge to Western Theory*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Lutz, Catherine & White, Geoffrey. 1986. 'The Anthropology of Emotions.' In *Annual Review of Anthropology* 15: 405-36.
- Lynch, Owen, M. 1988. 'Pilgrimage with Krishna, Sovereign of the Emotions.' In *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 22: 171-194.
- 1990 (ed.). *Divine Passions: The Social Construction of Emotion in India*. California: University of California Press.
- Lyon, Margot, L. 1995. 'Missing Emotion: the Limitations of Cultural Constructionism in the Study of Emotion.' *Cultural Anthropology* 10 (2).
- Lyon, M. L. & Barbalet, J. M. 1994. 'Society's body: emotion and the "somatization" of social theory.' In T. Csordas, *Embodiment and Experience: The Existential Ground of Culture and Self*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- MacAloon, John J. (ed.). 1984. *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle*. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues.
- Mahoney, Maureen A. and Yngvesson, Barbara. 1992. 'The Construction of Subjectivity and the Paradox of Resistance: Reintegrating Feminist Anthropology and Psychology.' In *Signs*: 44-73.
- Marglin, Frederique Apffel. 1985. *Wives of the God-King: The Rituals of the Devadasis of Puri*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 1990. 'Refining the Body: Transformative Emotion in Ritual in Dance.' In O. Lynch (ed.), *Divine Passions: The Social Construction of Emotion in India*. California: University of California Press.
- Maschio, Thomas. 1998. 'The Narrative and Counter-Narrative of the Gift: Emotional Dimensions of Ceremonial Exchange in Southwestern New Britain.' *JRAI* vol. 4 no 1: 83-100.
- Massey, Reginald. 1983. 'Tribute to Bharati.' In *The Dancing Times* LXXIII, no. 869.
- 1990. 'Introduction' to Dance Study Supplement, *The Dancing Times* LXXX, no. 955.
- Mauss, Marcel, [1950] 1990. *The Gift*. London: Routledge.
- Meduri, Avanti. 1988. 'Bharatha Natyam—What Are You?' In *Asian Theatre Journal*, Spring Issue: 1-22.
- 1992. 'Studies in Performance: Performance Studies.' In *Journal of Arts and Ideas* 22: 45-49.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. 1962. *The Phenomenology of Perception*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

- Mitchell, Jon P. 1997. 'A Moment with Christ: The Importance of Feeling in the Analysis of Belief.' In *JRAI* vol. 3, no. 1: 79-94.
- Montani, Abigail. 1999. *On the move: A Cultural Study of Contested Space on the East Coast of Sri Lanka*. Unpublished PhD Thesis.
- Morphy, Howard. 1996. 'Aesthetics is a cross-cultural category' (For the motion (1)). In T. Ingold (ed.), *Key Debates in Anthropology*. New York: Routledge.
- Mowry, Lucetta. 1983. 'The Theory of the Phenomenal World in Manikkaracakar's Tiruvacakam.' In F. Clothey and B.J.Long (eds.), *Experiencing Siva: Encounters with a Hindu Deity*. New Delhi: Manohar.
- Munn, Nancy. 1986. *The Fame of Gawa: A Symbolic Study of Value Transformation in a Massim (P.N.G.) Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Napier, David A. 1992. *Foreign Bodies: Performance, Art and Symbolic Anthropology*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Obeyesekere, Gananath. 1981. *Medusa's Hair: An Essay on Personal Symbols and Religious Experience*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press.
- 1990. *The Work of Culture: Symbolic Transformation In Psychoanalysis and Anthropology*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Ochs, Elinor. 1986. 'From Feeling to Grammar: A Samoan Case Study.' In B. Schiefflen and E. Ochs (eds.), *Language Socialisation Across Cultures*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- O'Flaherty, Wendy Doniger. 1984. *Dreams, Illusions, and Other Realities*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press.
- Okely, J. 1994. 'Vicarious and Sensory Knowledge of Chronology and Change: Ageing in Rural France.' In K. Hastrup & P. Hervik (eds.) *Social Experience and Anthropological Knowledge*. London: Routledge.
- Orr, Leslie, C. 2000. *Donors, Devotees and Daughters of God: Temple Women in Northern Tamilnadu*. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Osella, Caroline and Osella, Filippo. 1996. 'Articulation of Physical and Social Bodies in Kerala.' In *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 30:1: 37-68. New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London: SAGE Publications: 37-68.
- Overing, Joanna (ed.). 1985. *Reason and Morality*. London: Tavistock.
- 1996 'Aesthetics is a cross-cultural category' (Against the motion (1)). In T. Ingold (ed.), *Key Debates in Anthropology*. New York: Routledge.
- Padmanabhan Tampi, K. P. 1963. 'Kathakali—An Indigenous Art Form of Kerala.' In *Folklore*, June edition: 204-28.
- Pandolfo, Stefania. 1997. *Impasse of the Angels: Scenes from a Moroccan Space of Memory*. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press.

- Parkin, David. 1985. 'Reason, Emotion and the Embodiment of Power.' In J. Overing (ed.), *Reason and Morality*. London: Tavistock.
- Parry, Jonathan. 1985. 'The Brahmanical Tradition and the Technology of the Intellect.' In J. Overing (ed.), *Reason and Morality*. London: Tavistock.
- 1986. 'The Gift, The Indian Gift and the "Indian Gift."' In *Man* 21: 453-73.
- Pérez-Reverte, Arturo. 2000. *The Fencing Master*. London: Harvill Press.
- Puri, Rajika. 1983. 'The Dance in India.' In *Journal of Arts and Ideas*, April-June: 21-32.
- Rabinow, Paul. 1977. *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco*. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Raghupathy, Sudharani & Thangaswami Sarma, R (eds.) (trans. Dr S Ramaratnam). 1998. *Laghu Bharatham: Handbook on Bharatha Natyam vol. 1*. Chennai: Shree Bharatalaya.
- Ramanarayan, Gowri. 1998. 'Where are the Master Gurus?' In *The Hindu* (folio), December 27th.
- Ramanujan, A. K. (trans.). 1973. *Speaking of Siva*. Middlesex: Penguin.
- Ramaswamy, Sumathi. 1997. *Passions of the Tongue: Language and Devotion in Tamil India*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Rangacharya, Adya. 1996. *The Natyasastra* (English translation with critical notes). New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Pubs.
- Rao, Velcheru, Shulman, David & Subrahmanyam, Sanjay. 1992. *Symbols of Substance: Court and State in Nayaka Period Tamilnadu*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rapport, Nigel. 1997. *Transcendent Individual*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Riesman, Paul. 1977. *Freedom in Fulani Social Life: An Introspective Ethnography*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Rosaldo, Michelle Z. 1980. *Knowledge and Passion: Illongot Notions of Self and Social Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 1983. 'The Shame of Headhunters and the Autonomy of Self.' In *Ethos* 11: 135-51
- 1984. 'Toward an Anthropology of Self and Feeling.' In R.A. Shweder and R.A. LeVine (eds.), *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self, and Emotion*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Rosaldo, Renato I. 1994. 'Grief and the Headhunter's Rage: On the Cultural Force of Emotions.' In E Bruner (ed.), *Text Play and Story* Prospect Heights: Waveland Press.
- Sadasivan, Dr. K. 1993. *Devadasi System in Medieval Tamil Nadu*. Trivandrum: CBH Publications.

- Sahlins, Marshall. 1972. *Stone Age Economics*. Chicago: Aldine Atherton Inc.
- Sarabhai, Mrinalini. 1996. *Understanding Bharata Natyam*. Ahmedabad: Darpana.
- Saxena, S.K. 1989. 'The Rasa Theory: An Essay in Understanding.' In *Sangeet Natak* No. 91: 3-30.
- Schechner, Richard. 1993. *The Future of Ritual: Writings on Culture and Performance*. London: Routledge.
- Shankar, Jogan. 1990. *Devadasi Cult: A Sociological Analysis*. New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House.
- Sheets-Johnstone, Maxine. 1980 [1966]. *The Phenomenology of Dance*. Madison: Milwaukee Press.
- Schiefflen, B and Ochs, E. (eds.). 1986. *Language Socialisation Across Cultures*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Shweder, Richard A. and Levine, Robert A. (eds.). 1984. *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self, and Emotion*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Skultans, Vieda. 1974. *Intimacy and Ritual: A Study of Spiritualism, Mediums and Groups*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Solomon, Robert C. 1984. 'Getting Angry: the Jameson Theory of Emotion in Anthropology.' In R.A. Shweder and R.A. Levine (eds.), *Culture Theory: Essays on Mind, Self, and Emotion*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Spencer, Jonathan. 1989. 'Anthropology as a Kind of Writing.' In *Man* 24 (1): 145-64.
- Spencer, Paul (ed.). 1985. *Society and the Dance: The Social Anthropology of Process and Performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stokes, Martin. 1994. 'Turkish arabesk and the city: Urban popular culture as spatial practice.' In Ahmed & Donnan (eds.), *Islam, Globalization and Postmodernity*. London: Routledge.
- Stoller, Paul. 1989. *The Taste of Ethnographic Things: the Senses in Anthropology*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Strathern, Marilyn. 1979. 'The Self in Self-Decoration.' In *Oceania*, Vol XLIX no. 4: 241-257.
- Tambiah, S. J. 1968. 'The Magical Power of Words.' In *Man* 3: 175-203.
- Tarlo, Emma. 1996. *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India*. London: Hurst & Company.
- Thomas, Helen (ed.). 1993. *Dance, Gender and Culture*. London: Macmillan.

- Timm, Jeffery R. 1995. 'Scriptural Realism in Pure Nondualistic Vedanta.' In J. Timm (ed.), *Texts in Context: Traditional Hermeneutics in South Asia*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Timm, Jeffery R. (ed.). 1995. *Texts in Context: Traditional Hermeneutics in South Asia*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Toren, Christina. 1996. 'Aesthetics is a cross-cultural category' (The Debate). In T. Ingold (ed.), *Key Debates in Anthropology*. New York: Routledge.
- Trawick, Margaret. 1990. *Notes on Love in a Tamil Family*. Berkeley, Los Angeles & Oxford: University of California Press.
- Turner, Victor. 1967. *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- 1985. Edith L. B. Turner (ed.). *On the Edge of the Bush: Anthropology as Experience*. Arizona: University Press.
- Varley, Julia. 1998. 'Sanjukta Panigrahi: Dancer for the Gods.' *New Theatre Quarterly* no. 55 vol. xiv August: 249-273.
- Wacquant, Loïc. 1998. 'The Prizefighter's Three Bodies.' In *Ethnos*, vol. 63.3: 325-352.
- Washabaugh, William. 1996. *Flamenco: Passion, Politics and Popular Culture*. Oxford: Berg.
- Watson, C.W. (ed.). 1999. *Being There: Fieldwork in Anthropology*. London: Pluto Press.
- Weiner, James F. 1991. *The Empty Place*. Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- 1996. 'Against the Motion (2)'. In T. Ingold (ed.) *Key Debates in Anthropology*. New York: Routledge
- Wikan, Unni. 1990. *Managing Turbulent Hearts: A Balinese Formula for Living*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Witkin, Robert W. 1995. *Art and Social Structure*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1953. *Philosophical Investigations*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Yocum, Glenn E. 1983. 'Madness and Devotion in Manikkaracakar's Tiruvacakam.' In F.W. Clothey and B. J. Long (eds.). *Experiencing Siva: Encounters with a Hindu Deity*. New Delhi: Manohar.
- Zarrilli, Philip B. 1989. 'Three Bodies of Practice in a Traditional South Indian Martial Art.' In *Social Science Medical Journal* vol. 28, no. 12: 1289-1309.
- 2000. *Kathakali Dance-Drama: Where Gods and Demons Come to Play*. London: Routledge.